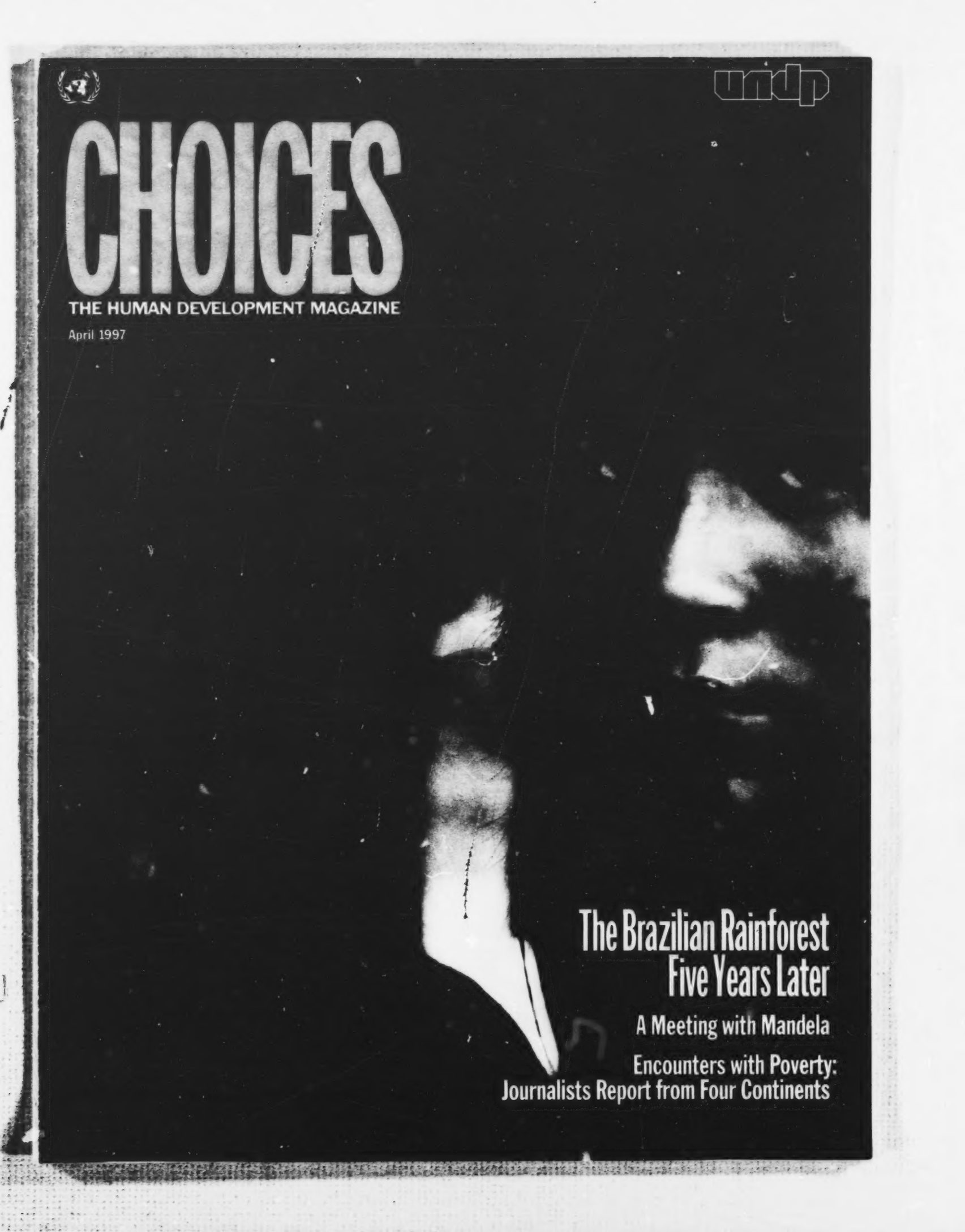

CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

April 1997

The Brazilian Rainforest Five Years Later

A Meeting with Mandela

Encounters with Poverty: Journalists Report from Four Continents

JAMES GUSTAVE SPETH

COMMENTARY

RIO+5: ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Just a few years ago, prevailing wisdom dictated that environmental protection was, if not a luxury, a secondary concern for the poor. After all, ours is a world where 1.3 billion people live in absolute poverty. What do air quality, species protection, the health of the ozone layer matter to people who are struggling for their next meal?

The truth is that the poor have a large stake—indeed a life-and-death stake—in the sustainable management of the earth's resources. Precisely because they are impoverished, the poor are often dependent on the surrounding environment for their income and very survival: fertile soil for food, forests for firewood and a host of other needs, streams for drinking water, plants for medicines. They are also more vulnerable to pollution, urban and rural, that can quickly kill—unclean water that carries infectious and parasitic diseases, deadly indoor and outdoor air pollution.

The poor often must degrade the environment to survive—eating their seed corn both literally and metaphorically. Environmental destruction further impoverishes the poor, thus creating a vicious cycle. Meanwhile, natural resource destruction is accelerated by a variety of misguided development schemes, resource-extraction concessions (often at below-market rates and often involving corruption), and poorly-regulated industrial investments.

Today we know that environmental degradation is not only caused by over-consumption and mismanagement of natural resources in the "advanced" sectors of all countries, rich and poor; it is also caused by the majority of the world's population who, as a result of poverty, have limited options.

Five years ago this June, 172 countries came together in Rio de Janeiro for the historic Earth Summit. There they endorsed a global plan of action known as Agenda 21, which recognized that development, poverty eradication and environmental protection are inextricably linked.

Since that landmark event, UNDP and many development partners have been working to ensure that governments keep the promises they made at Rio. In almost every developing country, UNDP is helping to devise national sustainable development programmes in line with Agenda 21. Twenty to twenty-five per cent of our resources are allocated to the environmental dimensions of development. Through the Global Environment Facility, we have sponsored more than 150 projects to protect biodiversity, mitigate climate change and prevent the pollution of international waters, while opening up opportunities for people to improve their lives.

In this issue of CHOICES, we can see a few of the concrete results: efforts in the Amazon that are preserving traditional livelihoods while conserving forest habitats; governments working together to protect the ozone layer; new partnerships between the public and the private sectors that are reconciling the needs of big business *and* local people. This cooperation is what sustainable human development is all about.

But, while the developing world is more committed than ever to protecting the environment, the industrialized countries of the North are not living up to the bargain made in Rio for financial support. Sadly, official development assistance has dropped to its lowest levels in 50 years: 0.27 per cent of the gross national product of the world's 29 richest countries—not the 0.7 per cent of GNP that the industrialized countries had pledged to development in Rio.

Rio buried the myth that environmental protection is a luxury of the rich; it is now widely seen as a necessity for the poor. Unless we decisively address the problem of poverty in the less developed countries, none of the great goals the international community has set for itself will be achieved. And unless we also address the sustainable management of our natural resources, a large portion of the poor will not have the means to lift themselves out of poverty.

James Gustave Speth is the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

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THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

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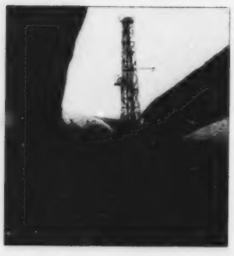

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A publication of the United Nations Development Programme

How does a hard-nosed journalist—trained to seek out news—react when confronted with a complex issue like poverty? UNDP found out when it organized "travelling seminars" to four continents in October and invited some of the world's top reporters and photographers to come along. Travelling mostly at their own expense, journalists representing 35 media organizations saw for themselves the debilitating effects of poverty and viewed first-hand some of the efforts being undertaken by UNDP—and most important, by people themselves—to ameliorate them. The four groups travelled to South Africa and Mozambique; Yemen and Djibouti; Croatia; and Bolivia and Peru. Their reactions, written exclusively for CHOICES, are excerpted on the following pages. The travelling seminars were just one part of a campaign by UNDP offices in 134 countries to raise public awareness of poverty and mobilize action to strike it out during the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, which runs through 2006.

POVERTY up close

ESSAYS FROM THE PRESS CORPS

AFRICA

Mery Aubespin,
Louisville Courier-Journal
Colette Braeckman, Le Soir
Bernardo Carlos, Noticias
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AFRICA
POVERTY UP CLOSE

PETER MAGUBANE/UNDP

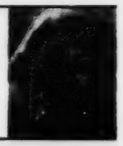
Most of the men from this South African township of Kgotsong are living in faraway cities and working in the gold mines. They send what money they can save back to their families.

HEIKE SCHNEIDER
Deutsche Presse-Agentur
Johannesburg

I have always been sceptical of development aid that is parachuted in from outside: where people from abroad define for others how they should go about solving their problems—or even try to solve them for them.

The projects we visited in Mozambique left me with the impression that there are ways to tackle poverty in a less patronizing way. I agree with one UNDP representative's comment that "development is what remains when outside input is gone."

COLETTE BRAECKMAN
Le Soir
Brussels



The grace period is over in South Africa. For while the whites are still living as well as people in Europe or the United States, blacks are still less well off than their neighbours in Botswana or Swaziland.

All one has to do to realize that is to leave the tarmac road leading to Kruger Park. In the Bushbuckridge District, around the village of Acornhoek in the north, injustice is stamped on the countryside. No more green lawns surrounded by high walls or plantations cultivated like gardens—the well-cared-for landscape of white South Africa. Here, in this former homeland, tracks disappear into the mud, and families are living in dried-earth houses or huts. But most conspicuous is the lack of men. The few who are to be seen, taking the sun or commenting on the recent census (for this is the first time in history that the inhabitants of this region are to be systematically counted, other than by air photography) are old, handicapped, ill. They were thrown out by the mines, sent back to their homelands by industry, when they were no longer of any use.

Along with the hopelessness, a certain dynamism animates Acornhoek. Beside the main road, a business centre offers passers-by coloured T-shirts and handicrafts. Further on, a cooperative has opened its doors; it supplies the schools and communities but also enables its members to buy at a fixed price the boiled maize that is the staple diet here. Just beside it, a group of disabled people explain that they have organized themselves so that they too can take their fate in their own hands. Perhaps this is why Else Mathebela, who lives alone with her six children and whose husband has disappeared somewhere around Johannesburg, is not considering leaving Acornhoek for better land.

Else, a good-looking woman in a blue dress, feels that she has a chance here: she attends the business centre regularly and is learning accounting and data processing. It is here that she wants to work with the other women of the *Pfunanani* (mutual assistance) association. A couple of years ago, 200 women established Pfunanani, which provides training and advises members on the best way to get started in private business, trade or handicrafts production. There is no shortage of projects: raising small livestock, garment making, aquaculture, housing construction.

Housing construction is one of South Africa's priorities, one of the main promises made by the government, which agreed to make grants available to improve the houses of the poorest. Large, white-owned construction enterprises would like to see this vast market opened up to them, so that they could quickly build what they call match-box houses: little rectangles with corrugated roofs, the most common dwellings in the townships for decades. Some members of the government believe that this is a simple, easy and sensible solution. But the people of Acornhoek, and doubtless other communities, don't look at it that way. For them, the individual family house they have dreamed of for so long is more complex than a few square metres of prefabricated dwelling. What they want is to improve and personalize their existing homes and participate in the construction in order to earn an income in their own communities. This method is undoubtedly slower, and more difficult for bureaucrats to manage, but it has the merit of allowing people to make decisions about their own development and of giving jobs to dozens of craftspeople, carpenters, bricklayers and cabinet-makers.

The debate that is enlivening Acornhoek about housing extends to other topics as well—the construction of roads, for example. In this case, too, the population would prefer, even with artisanal means, to implement such projects themselves.

This change in attitude, perhaps more than the visible changes, characterizes today's South Africa: the black majority is resolved to take the reins of development in its own hands, and to do so without waiting for the state to take the initiative.

Precisely for this reason—because she believes that the future lies in her hands—Else Mathebela will not be

leaving Acornhoek. And because of this, every day she redoes the attractive sign in front of the business centre that invites passers-by to come in and admire the handicrafts. "One day, the road will be widened, one day tourists and businessmen will be coming here. One day my husband will come back. To work."

MICHEL MARRIOTT
The New York Times
New York

The village is called Cassupe. It is a timeless stand of modest huts with straw roofs in a remote stretch of northern Mozambique in the Tete Province. Here in the dry, golden bush shared with broods of roaming lions live hundreds of men, women and children. They mark their days by the universal rhythms of sun and stars and, closer to earth, the perpetual pounding of corn that villagers carefully cultivate in nearby fields.

There are no clocks, no watches, and most villagers, when asked, say they do not know their age. But what they say they are certain of is that they exist in an era of favourable change.

Today, Cassupe bristles with life; its residents are determined to reclaim lives displaced by Mozambique's civil war, which officially ended in October 1992. Officials from the UNDP estimate that these villagers are among some one million refugees who, lured back by peace and free elections in 1994, have returned from Malawi.

"They are returning day by day," said Victor Zacharias, the 38-year-old project coordinator for UNDP's assistance efforts in Cassupe. "They are quite positive that the war is over. The people are positive now that there is life."

Since November 1995, Zacharias, born in Mozambique, reared in neighbouring Zambia and educated in Kenya and Japan, symbolizes UNDP's approach to helping Africa's impoverished help themselves.

This poverty eradication strategy is evident not only in Cassupe, but in rural areas just outside of Maputo, the nation's capital, where UNDP has helped women set up productive small farms. Clearly, capacity-building is a key element.

Standing near a blackboard showing a complex organizational tree of committee names, tasks and responsibilities, Zacharias said that the UNDP workers, like himself, are "just facilitators."

At the heart of Cassupe's rebirth is its community development committee and its various sub-committees, panels of villagers who plan and plot the future of the area. Critical needs like the building of wells, roads and clinics are frequent topics of discussion.

Margaret Dickson, the mother of six children, the youngest of which she carries on her back in a skilful turn of fabric, said the women of the village have an especially pressing need: a grinding mill.

With a mill, the women would no longer have to rise hours before dawn, hours before their men awaken. They would no longer have to stand in the open area, holding with both hands heavy shafts of time-worn wood far taller than themselves. And then, hour after hour, day after day, bring the shafts crashing down to pound the corn into meal for their families to eat.

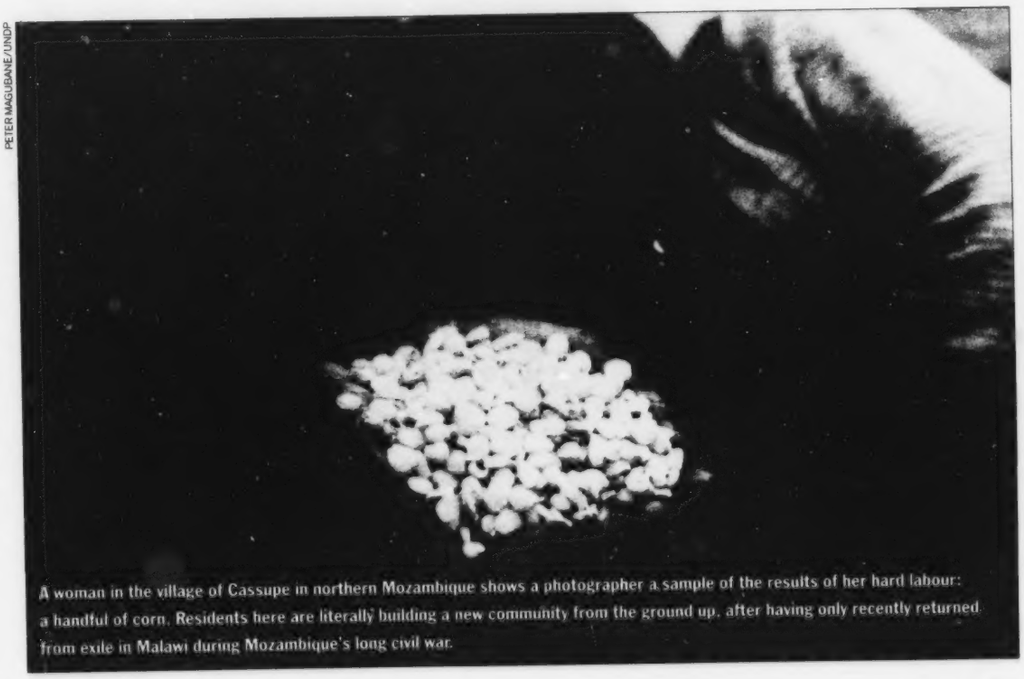
"If we had a mill, things would change," she said through a UN interpreter. "We would have more time to work in the fields."

Zacharias nodded knowingly. The people have spoken.

And despite the village's seemingly overwhelming needs and acutely finite resources, it was clear to me, after long days examining UNDP programmes in Mozambique and South Africa, that Margaret Dickson and Victor Zacharias would get Cassupe its grinding mills.

"We're working on it," Zacharias said with an optimistic gleam in his eyes. "We're working on it."

PETER MAGUBANE/UNDP



A woman in the village of Cassupe in northern Mozambique shows a photographer a sample of the results of her hard labour: a handful of corn. Residents here are literally building a new community from the ground up, after having only recently returned from exile in Malawi during Mozambique's long civil war.

MERV AUBESPIN
The Courier-Journal
Louisville

Most prominent in my memories of Mozambique are the women I met, who told me about their first difficult steps toward a better life. Most of all, I remember their strength, resolve and patience.

Lina Magaia, a big, hard-working member of parliament with a French beret, explained to us the importance of "Green Zones," areas in which local citizens now are attempting to grow produce. A woman with an imposing presence, her passion for her country is obvious as she talks about the role of women in rebuilding for the future.

"Like many women, I was a soldier for freedom," she said. "I've been shot, jailed and chased across the country, so I have every right to participate in rebuilding this nation, and I intend to do so."

Rosa Munhuambe, mother of seven children, proudly talks about how her life has changed for the better since she got a small loan from the community credit union. That enabled her to buy wood and coal to sell to her neighbours.

She feels that she is on her way to real success, now that she has been able to buy an electric saw. "Start small, but think big," she said with newfound confidence.

Then there was Graca Machel, former first lady and head of a community development foundation, who talked about the difference it has made in the lives of at least a few people.

"There are those who say that my country is the poorest in the world, but you can do something about poverty, and with our meagre resources, that is what we are trying to accomplish," she explained.

Yelesi Fernando also comes to mind. She walks to Mtengo-wa-Mbalame, a village 11 kilometres from her home, to attend meetings of the community development committee, which plans programmes to fight poverty. "We have to come together to make our lives better," she said

PETER MAGUBANE/UNDP

Self-help construction is the best hope in tackling a severe housing shortage in South Africa. Over a million homes are urgently needed.

She doesn't know her precise age, but the petite mother of six looks about 50. She doesn't really mind the long walk to Mtengo-wa-Mbalame, but she does admit that the dry heat and steep hills are a problem. "If maybe I could get a bicycle, that would help," she said.

The women of South Africa also made a significant impression during my visit there. My memory is filled with strong women, who are dedicated to making a difference in their own lives and their country's future.

Mama Iris Limkatos, a volunteer with the Homeless People's Federation, urged a small group of women at Kgotsong Township and other places to believe they can, indeed, save their money and build modest homes for themselves, using their own muscle and sweat.

"I try to say that you can build a better life if you are willing to work together," she said.

Earlier, at another location, we heard from Shelia Sithole, an official of the African National Congress and member of parliament, who explained that South Africa needs its white citizens and the resources and expertise they bring with them. However, she also would like to see measurable change in the lives of people of colour, and she wants to see it come more quickly.

"Of course our people are impatient ...they have every right to be," she said.

It took almost 50 years to topple apartheid, she reminded us, and apartheid imposed a terrible cost in human life and suffering.

"A lot of people thought things would change overnight," she added. "But we have only won a political struggle. There is still poverty. There is still disease. And a health system designed to take care of only ten per cent of the population."

PETER MAGUBANE/UNDP

With most of the men absent, the women of Kgotsong in South Africa are taking development into their own hands. They are building their own homes on government donated land with materials they have salvaged or bought by pooling resources.

JOHN YEARWOOD
Dallas Morning News
Dallas

In meetings with one group after another, in both Mozambique and South Africa, the message was the same: we need access to opportunity. No one was looking for a handout. In Cassupe, Mozambique, less time pounding maize equals more time the women would get to spend with their families and, presumably, even longer hours in the field. For Yelesi Fernando, a bicycle would mean that she would no longer have to walk four hours each way to attend district council meetings. Would a grinding mill, a bicycle or a few dollars by themselves lift these women out of poverty? More than likely not. But what it demonstrates is that the women are thinking about and planning for the future. Not long ago they said a bright future was way beyond their reach. That's not the case anymore.

ELMER SMITH
Daily News
Philadelphia

"It takes an entire village to raise a child," the African proverb counsels us. A first-hand look at the work of UNDP in Southern Africa has taught me that it takes an entire world to raise a village.

Villagers in Mtengo-wa-Mbalame in Mozambique, Kgotsong in South Africa and a dozen other places, who have endured the ravages of war, famine and apartheid, can only rise above their circumstances through the unified efforts of a committed world community.

"Start small, but think big," she said with newfound confidence.

The work of UNDP was not my first concern when I decided to avail myself of the opportunity this seminar offered. My main interest was to learn something about the cultures and peoples of this important part of the world and to write about them in a way that would help connect my readership to their plight.

Instead, what I got was an education on why it is so important for me and others to press for the United States' continued and even increased support of the United Nations.

Rather than being a world apart, my hope is that we will become part of a world that will not permit any of its people to die for lack of resources and expertise that we have available in abundance. ■

MANDELA ON POVERTY

The travelling seminar to South Africa culminated in a meeting with President Nelson Mandela in his home in Johannesburg. Highlights of his remarks to the journalists follow:

This International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is very important to us. It helps us to focus on our central challenge.

Although South Africa is said to be a middle-income country, most of our people live like those in some of the poorest countries in the world.

The rights enshrined in our new constitution will be empty and our democracy will remain fragile if they do not bring with them improvements in people's lives, especially those who bear the burden of poverty and inequality.

Poverty brings hunger, disease, inadequate shelter and homelessness. It hinders the development of children and leaves them on the margins of our society, squandering a wealth of human potential to contribute to the building of a prosperous South Africa.

As a caring society, we cannot fold our arms and leave this blight on the lives of millions of our people. That is why, as a government, we have declared war on poverty.

Among the first steps that our democratic government took was to initiate programmes focussed on the most urgent needs of the poor. These included the renovation of schools, nutrition schemes for school children, medical care for young children and pregnant mothers, and the repair and extension of infrastructure.

This was the beginning of our Reconstruction and Development Programme, which guides us to this day.

The challenge is to build on this start.

The establishment of democratic local government has greatly strengthened our capacity to implement programmes of reconstruction and development. And we are resolutely committed to identifying blockages and to tracking down waste and corruption.

Our macro-economic strategy is a framework for sustained growth that will create the jobs and the resources for reconstruction and development. It is a framework that will create the conditions in which health care, housing, education and the other needs of our people can be addressed.

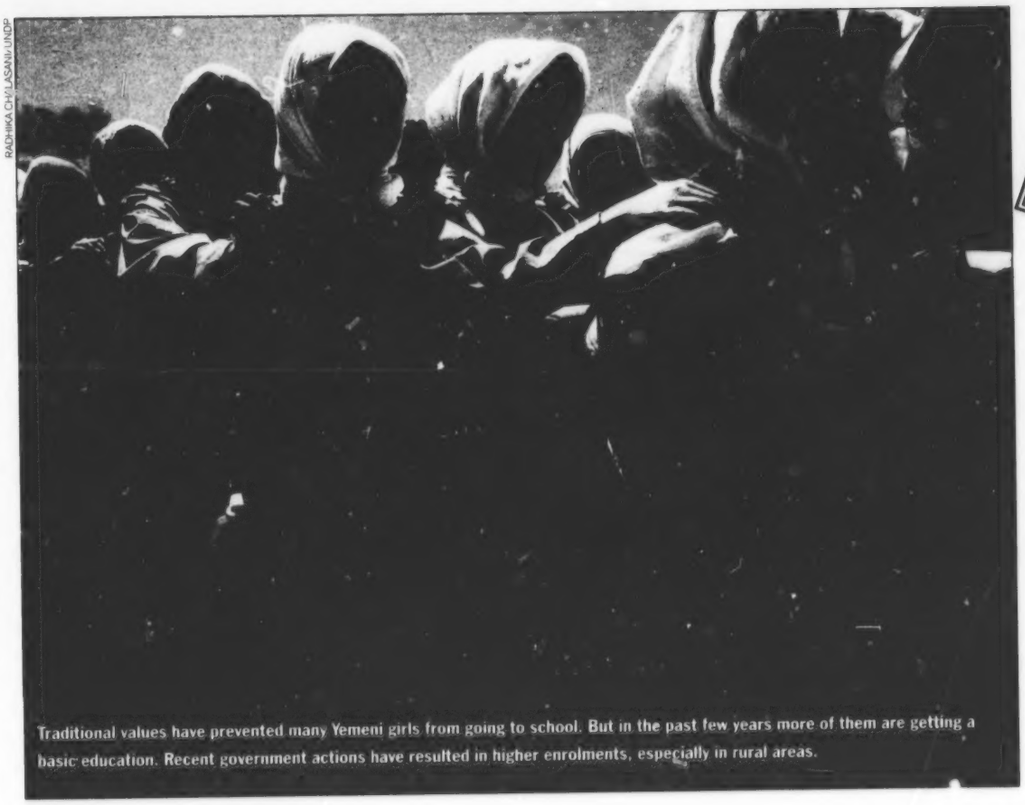
As a call, government will continue to make its programmes for eradicating poverty our priority.

These goals cannot be achieved by government alone. The poor in rural areas and informal settlements, among women and youth, the disabled and the elderly – have always been ready to take the initiative to change the circumstances of their lives. In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, it is they who will be the driving force to uplift their own communities, in partnership with government and other sectors of society.

Our contribution to the struggle against poverty is not confined to South Africa. No country in our region or continent can eliminate poverty on its own.

Let us join hands to banish the needless scourge of poverty and inequality from our land. ■

ARAB STATES
POVERTY UP CLOSE



RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Traditional values have prevented many Yemeni girls from going to school. But in the past few years more of them are getting a basic education. Recent government actions have resulted in higher enrolments, especially in rural areas.

ILENE PRUSHER
Christian Science Monitor
Jerusalem

At the back of the classroom of 40 boys sat two girls. Like most females throughout Yemen, the girls' hands were gloved and faces cloaked, leaving only a small horizontal slit for their eyes.

What did the girls want to be when they grew up?

"A teacher," one muffled feminine voice told me from behind the scarf that fit snugly over her nose and mouth. "A doctor," said the other.

I smiled—at first. In a part of the country where less than a quarter of the women are literate, how would they succeed? What would stop these girls from following the path of the village's other women, who usually marry in their teens and have an average of ten children?

In the countryside of Dhamar Province, one of the country's poorest, there are few professions for anyone, much less for women. Besides, most parents won't let their daughters go to school—deeming it unacceptable for them either to learn alongside boys or to walk alone to class.

Before UNDP helped build the school about a year ago, the only people who learned to read were men who studied the Koran at the mosque. Now girls are learning to read too. Still, out of the 1,483 children enroled in all the new schools in this region, only seven per cent are female.

In northern Yemen, where most women are shrouded in a *sharshaf*, segregation of the sexes appears to be the norm. At a workshop in Sana'a, roles are traditional: women in embroidery, men in woodworking.

"One woman joined us but she felt embarrassed, so she left," said one male Yemeni carpentry apprentice. "This is a man's job," said another apprentice. "It's a tradition from generation to generation."

When Yemeni politicians are asked about the dire conditions of Yemeni women, they hark back to Queen Bilqis, whose rule is described in the Old Testament, and say they would like to see women again rise to positions of power.

But that won't happen soon if women miss out on school and bear more children than they can afford to feed. Yet old traditions favouring large families are hard to change. According to Yemen's National Population Council, most Yemenis believe that Islam encourages large families. Young brides try to get pregnant as early as possible, often competing for fertility with their peers. Men see multiple births as proof of their manliness.

What would stop these girls from following the path of the village's other women?

With so many obstacles to women's advancement, where do you start? Teams of roving mobile units are already working with women in poor urban and rural areas. Each team has health-care workers and teachers who help with many things, including literacy, childcare, small business start-ups—and not just family planning.

Field workers encourage girls and women to go to school, stay there longer (which often raises their age at marriage), and to space births by at least two years.

The key, says the UN Population Fund's Jocelyn Talbot, is showing women more opportunities. "The poorer you are, the less educated you are, the more you need a *raison d'être*."

In this corner of the world, where even school is a novelty, such reasons are sometimes hard to find. But some people have started looking. In one tiny village in rural Dhamar, a little girl wants to become a doctor.

GUIDO GOUDSMIT
De Volkskrant
Amsterdam

The older Yemenis automatically grasp foreigners' hands in the *suq*, whispering *"effendi"* (a Turkish term of honour). They kiss strangers, perhaps following a tradition of the Ottomans who once colonized their country.

But younger Yemenis don't look back. They sit idly in the streets, waiting for the Yemeni economy to boom one day. "Your help is coming too late," one 20-year-old said to me.

Assistance provided to Yemen these days is aimed mainly at "poverty eradication." This is no easy job anywhere, and Yemen is no exception. The country faces all sorts of difficulties in propping up its economy. For example, the army, with its million soldiers, drains the national coffers. Demilitarization is necessary, but the consequence would be even more idle youngsters on the streets. UNDP and other donors say that "sustainable human development" is the way to eradicate poverty in coun-

RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Yemenis stroll through the ancient city of Sana'a, much of which is under restoration with help from UNDP and others. Craftspeople are being trained to preserve the city's unique architecture and rich artistic heritage.

tries like Yemen. It sounds great, but what is the real meaning of this grandiose term?

We visited some UNDP-financed projects in Yemen to find out. We drove in four-wheel drives over just-paved feeder roads, entered newly painted schools, talked to the smart economists of a credit programme, walked through a carpentry shop and in front of the restored houses of Sana'a and Shibam. Was this sustainable human development?

> I looked at the youngsters on the street and tried to imagine a future for them.

I looked at the youngsters on the street and tried to see beyond the rubble, the dust and the sand to imagine a future for them. It will be bright, the UNDP believes. Their experts gave me their magic formula: the good old "multiplier effect," through which one development action leads to progress in other parts of society.

There were lots of multiplier-supporters around. Most of them appeared to be non-Yemeni. An expatriate consultant enthusiastically showed us the future venture-capitalist Port of Aden. He assured us that this new local "free economic zone" would be a net cash-earner in 20 years. And with the multiplier effect, prosperity at the port would lead to more jobs and higher incomes for the poor.

But the multiplier effect can never be the Holy Grail as long as social conditions—including educational standards and a skilled labour force—in Yemen and elsewhere are wanting.

The multiplier equation takes for granted that there is a large pool of skilled entrepreneurs to draw from. But Yemen's economy is still predominantly subsistence. The peasants in Dhamar Province, for example, have never marketed their produce. UNDP can help peasants like these begin doing this, but the effects will be local at best.

A vibrant and efficient marketplace can only become reality when Yemeni society as a whole (the same is true in other least-developed countries) decides to pursue "sustainable human development." This means that social goals are pursued just as vigorously as economic ones, and that the country accept whatever political ramifications go along with that.

But heaven, unfortunately, must wait. Among many of the Yemenis we met, it's still business as usual.

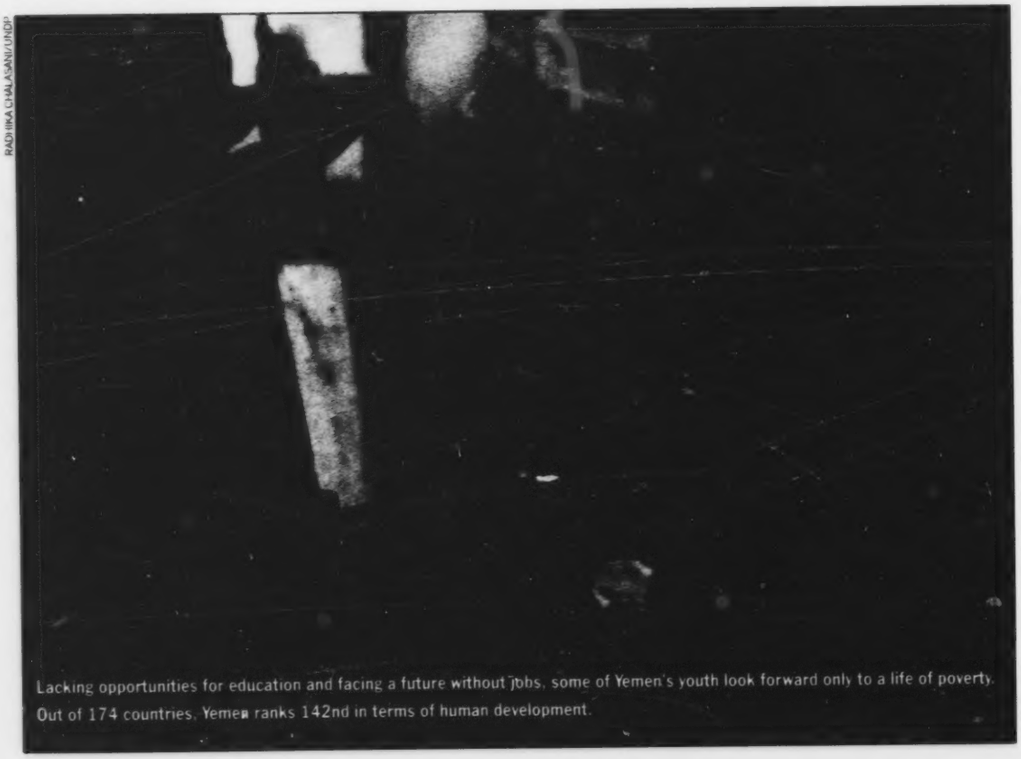
YOUSSEF IHAZEM
Al-Hayat
London

Hussein Othman ran toward the convoy and looked anxiously inside the cars. He glanced repeatedly at the piece of paper in his hand, as if to assure himself that it was still there.

Eventually he found who he was looking for. He greeted Manal Wardah, a UNDP representative who works in the area and handed her his precious scrap of paper with a message written in broken Arabic:

To whom it may concern,
The Alrazwa area needs a dam.
We have wells but we need a dam to improve irrigation. A committee visited us but nothing happened. We need your help urgently.
The villagers of Alrazwa

"Do not worry about the work and don't send any labourers," Hussein told Manal. "We have a large number of young, skilled workers who volunteered to do the job. We just need an expert in building dams



RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Lacking opportunities for education and facing a future without jobs, some of Yemen's youth look forward only to a life of poverty. Out of 174 countries, Yemen ranks 142nd in terms of human development.

RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Social and economic advancements in Yemen depend in part on an educated population. New schools in Dhamar Province and elsewhere are equipping children to take on the challenges of the future.

and some equipment. We will do the rest ourselves."

The villagers of Alrazwa in Yemen illustrate what can be done to improve the lives of the world's poor by helping them to solve their own problems. What countries like Yemen need is good management, expertise and training. And, like Hussein Othman said, the poor will do the rest themselves.

BETSY PISIK
Washington Times
New York

In a new cinderblock schoolhouse here, three and sometimes four small boys are crammed behind wooden desks built for two. These eight- and nine-year-olds are learning to read, do math and wonder about the world beyond their villages. All sit attentively, as though aware of the privilege of learning.

This six-room schoolhouse, and nine others just like it, are part of a government programme funded by the United Nations Capital Development Fund. Residents of these fertile mountain villages in Yemen helped build the schools and 75 kilometres of rough feeder roads, with the immediate impact of opening the villages to trade—and the minds of their children.

Until the project's completion in 1995, there had never before been a school or formal educational structure in tiny towns like Jaf-Al-Tahir, Shamhaz or Homarah. Children were taught by elders under trees, or in an extra room in someone's home.

"It is amazing to me how little it takes to turn a village around completely," said Onder Yucer, the UNDP resident representative in Yemen. "In only ten years, we will have changed their lives."

It is a sweeping statement, but it stands as truth. In a country where fewer than half the children are enroled in school and illiteracy tops 58 per cent, the schools, overcrowded as they are, are vital.

The new feeder roads that pass near the school are merely graded ribbons of dirt and gravel, but they link the villages with main routes and the commercial opportunities that come with trade. The roads also mean that residents can get to faraway hospitals and other previously inaccessible amenities.

There is much work yet to do in Yemen, which ranked 142nd out of 174 nations in UNDP's Human Development Index. For example, in this part of the country, many villages are still without basics such as running water and electricity. And several nearby villages are desperate to educate their own children.

IAN WILLIAMS
UN Correspondents Assn.
New York

Tribal retainers with dangling AK-47s escorted us to see UNDP-supported schools and roads in Aden, in southern Yemen.

At the schools, the pupils may have been ragged, but they were eager to learn and ambitious for the future.

RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Djiboutian women crowd around BBC journalist Alice Martin to share their problems and explain how small amounts of assistance from the government and development agencies can help.

RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Young Yemeni shows off catch of the day. Yemen, like Djibouti, is encouraging more people to eat fish as a source of protein.

Refreshingly many of them wanted to be engineers and doctors, rather than bankers and brokers. One or two even claimed ambitions to be journalists!

Sadly, girls were only a tiny minority of the pupils, but it was so clearly good for any of them to be in school at all that one could hardly quibble. It was a promising beginning. Black-veiled girls hunched over tables during sewing classes seemed demeaning. But then, several of them explained that this was their only chance to leave home and talk with other women outside their families. Like most steps forward, it could lead to others—like one young woman in Sana'a expressing her wish to stop sewing and join a wood-carving class.

ALICE MARTIN
The Guardian, BBC
Addis Ababa

"Give up school, my son." This was the unusual advice of a father to his son, the last born of 17 children, all Afar nomads raised among the camels along the salt caravans between Djibouti and Ethiopia.

Life was difficult because of civil wars and dwindling livestock herds. The father needed the young man's help in supporting the large family. The boy honoured his father's wishes. He ran away year after year from a French-run school on the northern side of Djibouti's Tadjoura Bay.

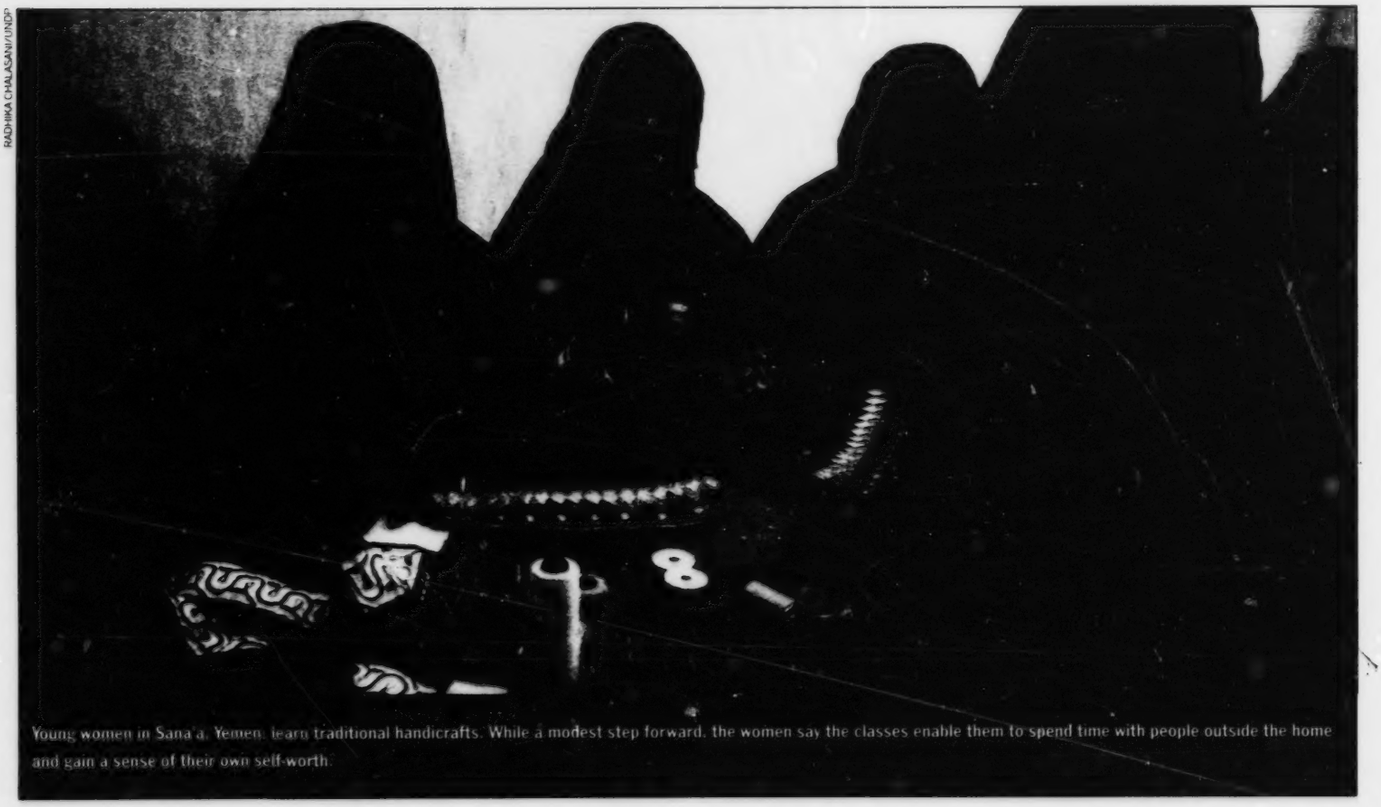
His mother confronted her son. "Why do you keep running away? Why do you throw away the chances your brothers and sisters never had?"

The boy thought a long time. And in the end, his mother won. He stayed in school and even went to college. Now he has a handsome job in the city. In fact he works for the UNDP office in Djibouti's capital. He leads projects that assist women, stop the spread of HIV and AIDS and make sure people have enough to eat. Every weekend he goes back to his family living in the house he has bought for them.

"My father has forgiven me," he says. "But I do not think he will ever forgive my mother. It is hard for a nomad to accept that there is any other life than the open spaces."

It is a moral tale of a kind that leaves only sadness, that makes one regret the passing of ancient traditions and patterns of living. It is amazing to find the last-born of a family of nomads, the only one to receive a formal education, dedicating his life to the development of his people and his nation.

It is a privilege to meet such a man and hear first-hand of the caravan trail and the wonders of a way of life in a terrain that looks more alien than the moon. But it is also profoundly depressing that life is so and that new ways must always replace the old and that the caravan trail will be captured on film in its dying days for the next generation to experience only on a television screen. ■



RADHIKA CHALASANI/UNDP

Young women in Sana'a, Yemen, learn traditional handicrafts. While a modest step forward, the women say the classes enable them to spend time with people outside the home and gain a sense of their own self-worth.

EUROPE
POVERTY UP CLOSE

VEDRAN SAMANOVIC/UNDP

This resident of Drnis, in Croatia, fights back tears as she recalls the death of her only son, who was killed on the front lines. Her only wish is to bring his body back home.

LORE LAWRENCE
San Francisco Chronicle
Belgrade

"I know it sounds terrible," said the voice that was 10,000 kilometres away. "But unless you can show me some significant difference between Serbian and Bosnian and Croat refugees, I probably won't be taking your piece."

Desperation is a hard sell. As a freelance reporter newly arrived in the Balkans, I had just finished a story about Serbs from Krajina and Bosnia who had taken refuge from the war in Yugoslavia. I was discovering the world didn't want to hear about more suffering, no matter whose it was.

"It's just that people get turned off by reading all this stuff," continued the apologetic editor on the other end. "They're immune."

Months later, I was travelling with UNDP through the war-ravaged areas of Croatia, listening to people tell the same—but different—stories over and over again. It was difficult to step over the rubble of broken houses and demolished lives without going numb myself. A reporter's job is to help make a connection between the reader and the subject, which in this case, happened to be real people.

Gordana Matic, who lives in the village of Sonkovic, is one of those stories. When the war came, she scooped up her baby and ran through the darkness across a field laced with mines, out of the village she had lived in all her life. Four years later, the war was over and Gordana and her husband Milenko returned to Sonkovic with their son and another baby born during their exile.

Their commitment to return is strong, despite severe obstacles. Once a village of 400, Sonkovic is now only 15 people. The power station was mined, and electricity is sporadic. The only public phone must be run by solar power. There is no school. No running water either. Parts of the village are still mined; the rest is rocks and rubble.

Under these conditions, few can afford to return, and fewer still choose to. Around Sibenik, 12,000 people are still displaced, living in dingy state-run hotels or in private accommodations. Another 9,000 from the area are refugees from abroad. With the area's heavy industry, already ailing before the war, now virtually dead, and with the tourist trade down sharply, there is little to come back to.

> Desperation is a hard sell. I was discovering the world didn't want to hear about more suffering, no matter whose it was.

Standing in her home, the remaining walls of which are riddled with mortar holes, her possessions stripped bare, Gordana Matic says simply, "Any help will be welcome."

UNDP has been up and running in Croatia for less than a year, and its working budget is a grand total of $300,000. Almost half of that—$115,000—is earmarked for a pilot programme in Sibenik to help determine what basic needs are required to get people to return. Residents, working with UNDP, expect to finish their report in a couple of months. Meeting basic needs—education, housing, economic development and social infrastructure—will probably cost between $40 million and $80 million and will take an estimated three years.

It's expensive, especially considering that these figures cover just the basics. One may ask, why bother? How will this project affect individuals in London or New York or Tokyo? What will rebuilding in just one small area do overall?

The value of programmes such as this is difficult to measure; the overall effectiveness, the lives put back together cannot be measured on some computer spread sheet. And although anti-poverty programmes may eliminate some suffering, they cannot eliminate it all.

But programmes like UNDP's Sibenik venture do affect people in far-off Western countries. Because when people "over there" are less desperate, less hungry, do not forfeit all their dignity in a continued attempt to stay alive, have someplace to live and are able to see their lives in the future, they are less susceptible to the call of the demagogue. They have less to begrudge their neighbour; they have more energy to put into building a culture than destroying it. It means peace for people in Croatia and in the Balkans and peace for people in London and New York and Tokyo.

VEDRAN SAMANOVIC/UNDP

Compounding the devastation of war in Croatia, an earthquake struck an area northwest of Dubrovnik last September. Three villages with a total population of 9,000 were destroyed, leaving more than 1,100 people homeless.

MARK ABLEY
Montreal Gazette
Montreal

Imagine a resort hotel a stone's throw from the Adriatic Sea. In the old days, Yugoslavia used to glean a fifth of its hard currency from tourists who came to bask in the sun on this wine-dark coast. Then the war broke out, villages and farms turned to rubble, and the Hotel Solaris, empty of visitors, became a shelter for Croatian refugees. Thousands of them have been camping here for the last five years.

Imagine the place today: graffiti, peeling wallpaper, missing lightbulbs; a cold-water air of decrepitude. A haunt of crows. But the ageless, chattering women in black far outnumber the crows.

Now imagine a young man. I found him standing on the front steps, staring out towards the sea. He was slender, clean-shaven, dark-haired; in other circumstances, you would have called him handsome. Now he was ill-at-ease: a displaced person without a job or home, a man still living in the small apartment that the authorities had offered his parents. There was a vacancy in his sullen gaze. The evening I met him, he seemed lost, overwhelmed by the injustice of fate, helpless to do a thing about it. His first name was Ante. He wouldn't give me any other.

"My village had 50 or 60 houses," he told me. "All of them lie in ruins."

"How do you feel about the situation?" I asked. A stupid question, of course. But sometimes the most stupid questions elicit the most telling answers.

"How do I feel?" he shot back. "Try to imagine how I feel!"

I shrugged and moved on to other displaced persons, other refugees. The hotel was full of them. There was a stooped Bosnian in his eighties who had fought in Hitler's war on the side of the local fascists. There was an unemployed mechanic whose breath reeked of brandy. There was an old woman who stabbed a finger in the air and passed me a handwritten note complaining about the furniture and food. People living in squalor occasionally have touching illusions about the power of foreign journalists.

These are the people whom UNDP has undertaken to help. God knows they can use it. Some of them are without a prayer of creating a new life. Others are simply in dire need. If your home in southern Bosnia no longer exists, or if your hamlet in the Croatian interior was shelled and stripped and mined to the point of no return, or if your family was "cleansed" (loathsome word), then you may well be glad of help. In such cases, the traditional models of development make sense.

> His poverty goes beyond mere living conditions and a lack of money.

Fine. But what of Ante?

I think he is the deepest challenge. There may not be money enough in the world to salvage him—certainly not in the quivering budgets of aid agencies. His poverty goes beyond mere living conditions and a lack of money; his poverty is also spiritual, emotional, intellectual. Years ago he finished school, but now he has no interest in reading or learning. He's too proud to take a low-paying dead-end job—the only lawful work he could readily find. He believes that in the future, nothing will improve. Yet at the same time, he feels profoundly cheated. He knows that life is passing him by.

It's fine and noble to speak of eradicating poverty. But if I'm ever tempted to believe that it might actually occur, all I have to do is think of Ante.

Today, if I looked for Ante, I could find him staring into the distance in many other countries, too—including my own. His bitterness, his sadness, his emptiness would be the same. How can you "eradicate" those? And the helplessness of governments to deal with him: that would be the same, too.

VEDRAN SAMANOVIC/UNDP

This Croat family returned to their destroyed home in 1995, surviving without electricity for more than a year. The kitchen is usable, but half the living room wall was blown away during the war. The family's olive groves are strewn with landmines. "Before the war we had everything—a good income, a nice home, lots of farm machinery," says the mother, Gordana Matic. "Now we have to rebuild it all."

STÉPHANE KOVACS
Le Figaro
Paris

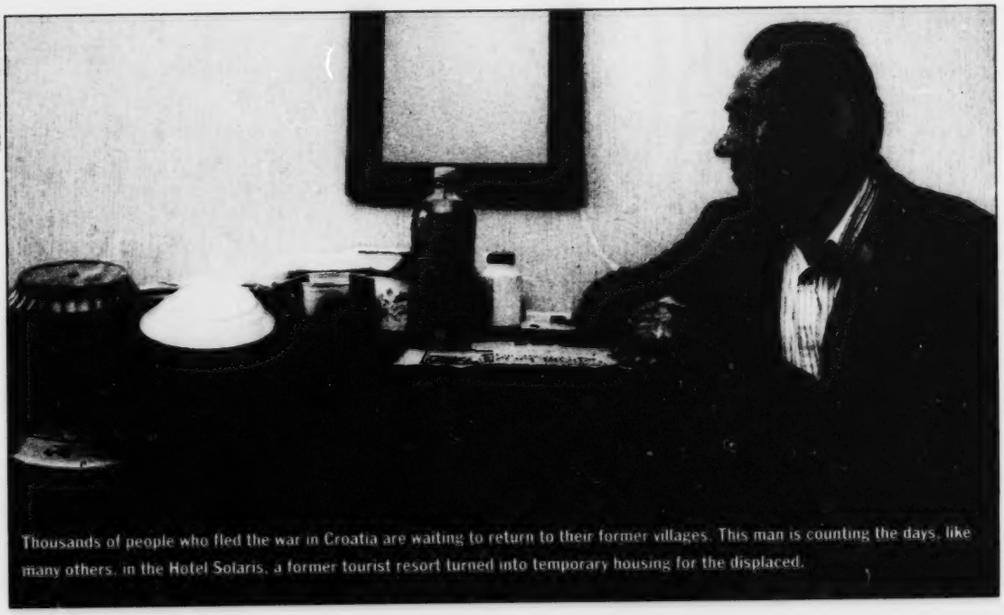
Rosalia abandoned everything in the space of a few minutes, leaving her house in flames and (without looking back) climbing into the old car of one of her neighbours. All this 74-year-old great grandmother now owns is a few pieces of clothing provided by humanitarian organizations, she explains, pointing to her old dress covered with patches.

Every day, the old woman listens to the radio—mostly for news of her home town of Vukovar—knitting as she listens. "Knitting helps stop me going mad in the winter when we can't go outside. And then," she adds, pointing to an old suitcase overflowing with multi-coloured pieces of cloth, blankets and table mats, "I'll have something to decorate my house with when I go back."

EVE-ANN PRENTICE
The Times
London

The aim of our trip was to understand the problems facing the wretched thousands of people living in rundown hotels along the Dalmatian Coast, five long years after war erupted. The obvious hurdles are the landmines that pepper the farmers' land, the former socialist regime's defunct factories that will never reopen, and the sheer scale of the damage to homes, schools, infrastructure and, perhaps most important, to relations between people who were once old friends and neighbours. The UNDP is keen to restore some sort of economic stability to the region around Sibenik in the belief that this will encourage those who fled to return. But Croatia's ponderous, sluggardly struggle towards real democracy means that people at all levels do not trust one another, and this is likely to be a more hidden, but nonetheless real, obstacle to a return to normality in the countryside. ■

VEDRAN SAMANOVIC/UNDP



Thousands of people who fled the war in Croatia are waiting to return to their former villages. This man is counting the days, like many others, in the Hotel Solaris, a former tourist resort turned into temporary housing for the displaced.

LATIN AMERICA
POVERTY UP CLOSE

JORGE DEUSTUA/UNDP

Children carry goods home from the Sunday market. The elders of this Peruvian village of Huama, 40 kilometres from Cuzco, still talk about the small size of potatoes when they were children. Now Huama has a new irrigation system, which has helped to double annual crop yields, increase potato size and raise families' incomes.

JAKOB RUBIN
Jyllands-Posten
Rio de Janeiro

I am an honorary citizen of two small villages in the Andes—Huanoquite and Lamay. I have a card written in gold letters to prove it.

We were in a place where the daily wage is no more than a couple of Danish kroner (about 30 US cents). Parasites, tuberculosis and infant diarrhoea are among the leading causes of death; diseases that are curable in my country are fatal here.

Our delegation of six international journalists visited several communities in the great Altiplano, a high plateau lying between Peru and Bolivia at an altitude of 4,000 metres.

Thanks to the work of aid organizations, these Quechua-speaking peasants, who are direct descendants of the Incas, have roads, decorated sheep pens and a network for trading their art. The improvements in their society are small if seen through our eyes but enormous seen through theirs. In some villages, the profit from art sales is double what was earned from crops; in others, the new gravel road has made it possible for people to get their products to town by truck in a few hours, instead of walking for up to 14 hours.

PEDRO COTE/UNDP

"Poverty equals lack of water," is a common phrase in the village of Mora-Mora, in the mountains of Potosi, Bolivia. On the day that journalists arrived here, a new dam was blessed in a traditional ritual, and journalists were showered with confetti.

Everywhere we were given an overwhelming reception. In accordance with tradition, we were embraced first by the married women and after that by the rest of the community with the leaders at the helm. Sometimes they adorned us with strings of potatoes and corn—their sacred crops. Unmarried women clad in brightly-coloured costumes sang in high-pitched voices, while others dished out food to us in portions they rarely saw on their own plates.

These encounters moved me deeply. I thought of my safe adolescence in my sheltered lilliputian homeland of Denmark, thousands of kilometres away.

I didn't know how to respond to my hosts' strong emotions. After all, I hadn't given anything to them. The most I had done was to shake hands, visit, smile—pittances for people who live on the verge of famine.

My mother had tried to teach me honesty and respect for others. But in the Andes, my upbringing failed me. I didn't know how to behave when, dressed in the latest high-tech clothing, carrying a camera, a tape-recorder and a huge pen, I met people who look old at the age of 25 due to the hardships of their life and the burning Andean sun.

> **Weren't we just the masters being hailed by the oppressed?**

Their joy was so contagious that I danced, drank and laughed with them; but in my heart I hurt.

I wanted to cry over the world's injustice.

More than once we were delayed for hours. At one place, 200 people sat and waited for us, dressed in their finest ponchos. We were four hours late when we arrived at 9 pm. They rose, presented us with gifts, and the festivities came to an end because

we were tired. At the same time they were about to collapse with fatigue because, as usual, they had gotten up at the crack of dawn.

Wasn't this a new version of an old story? Weren't we just the masters being hailed by the oppressed, who were kept under control by their own poverty?

During that month in the Andes, I was brought down to the depths of poverty, and when I came home I was a richer person.

The people of Huanoquite, Lamay and the other Andean towns are honorary citizens of my heart. Despite their poverty, they give in abundance. And taught me much.

JEAN-MICHEL CAROIT
Le Monde
Santo Domingo

"The fight against poverty is the great task of the next century. The planet cannot tolerate so few people who are so rich and so many people who are so poor," says Bolivian President Gonzalez Sánchez de Losada. Because he is finishing his last term in office, Sánchez de Losada has little concern for his own popularity and is able to go farther than many of his counterparts in diagnosing poverty and prescribing remedies to combat it. Describing himself, for want of a better term, as a "social liberal," he emphasizes that Bolivia has little time left to become what he calls "a viable country." As a realist, he notes that since the fall of the Berlin Wall, donor fatigue has set in. "Aid flows are decreasing and donors are rightly calling for results," he notes.

The "dynamic" of combating poverty entails "three inseparable components," says the Bolivian president. On the political level, decision-making power must be restored to local authorities. On the social level, the management of health and education—the main instruments of change for the underclass—must be decentralized. Lastly, on the economic level, new technologies and microcredit must be made available to the poorest.

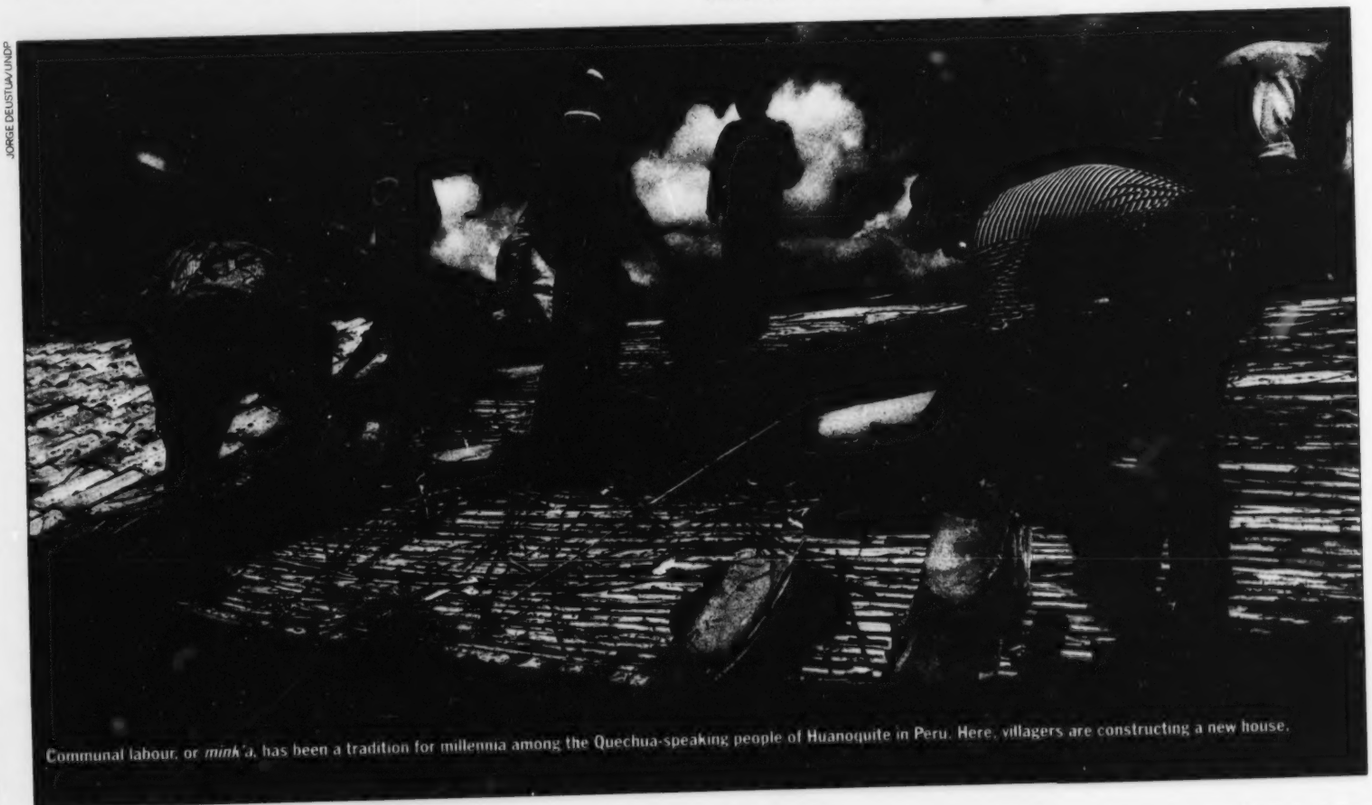
The Popular Participation Act, in force for almost two years, is an example of the strong effort at decentralization that is under way in Bolivia. As a result, the country today is divided into 311 municipalities (previously there were only 21), each of which is determining its own priorities and directing its own resources. In each municipality, an "oversight committee" monitors the work of the mayor and municipal employees, ensuring that administrative costs do not exceed ten per cent of the budget, and that the remainder is indeed invested. "Bolivia is the first country in Latin America to implement a policy for strengthening municipalities as a state policy," says Carlos Hugo Molina, national secretary for popular participation.

"The planet cannot tolerate so few people who are so rich and so many people who are so poor."

The budget of Betanzos, for example, a city of 32,000 inhabitants near Potosí, has risen from 80,000 Bolivianos (around US$16,000) to more than $1 million—thanks to the decentralization of resources. As a matter of priority, this manna from heaven has been allocated to education, which, according to Mayor Ernesto Patino, is the main interest of the local population.

Dialogue and the establishment of priorities are the watchwords of those in charge of the projects, which channel both national and international aid. In Bolivia, as in Peru, these foot soldiers of development rely on existing community structures to define their needs and establish budgets. The aspirations of the indigenous inhabitants of Bolivia and Peru, whose living conditions have scarcely changed since the Spanish conquest, echo from the Altiplano to the bare slopes that rise above Cuzco to an altitude of more than 4,000 metres: irrigation canals, roads, schools.

"Poor and indigenous are synonymous. Combating poverty is in the first place improving the living conditions of the indigenous population," says Victor Hugo Cardenas, Bolivia's vice president, who is himself an Aymara Indian. "My appointment in government doesn't solve all the problems, far from it. But it is a first step towards dismantling the internal colonialism that still characterizes Bolivia."



JORGE DELISTUA/UNDP

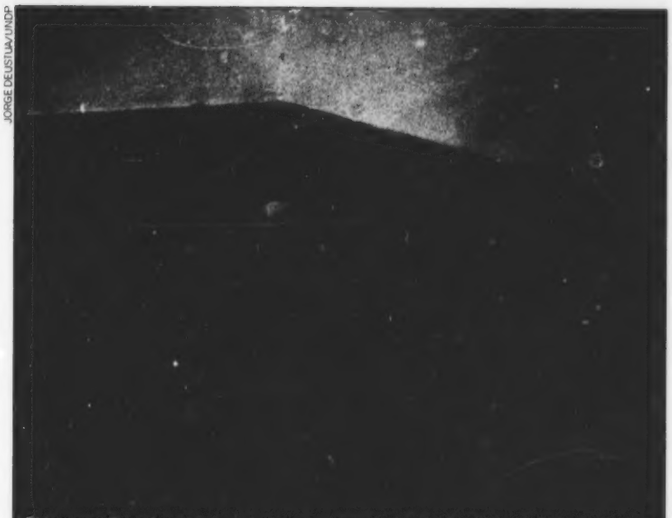
Communal labour, or *minka*, has been a tradition for millennia among the Quechua-speaking people of Huanoquite in Peru. Here, villagers are constructing a new house.

René Alfonso Galdós, the mayor of Huanoquite in the Peruvian Andes, has staked everything on opening up the community he administers. The bulk of the municipal budget is being used to pay for a bulldozer that is clearing the way for new mountain roads to remote communities. Kencconay is a model village in which the evangelist faith unites the community and wards off the scourge of alcoholism; it will soon be linked to a nearby town by a road suitable for motor vehicles.

Backed by resources from the central government, the war against poverty under way in Peru appears less radical than that of Bolivia. Whether in the programme for assistance in the return of refugees in the Ayacucho region or the many achievements of Foncodes, the main agency responsible for combating poverty, which is directly attached to the Office of the President, political concerns appear to be more present than on the Bolivian Altiplano.

My impression was that there is now hope.

JORGE DEUSTUA/UNDP



This young Peruvian girl, born in Lima, returned with her family to their former home in Huamanga, where they are free from terrorism but not from the yoke of poverty.

GIANLUIGI MELEGA
L'Espresso
Rome

Twenty years ago, when I first travelled to South America, the peasants of the high plateaus and the peaks of the Cordillera were eking out an almost desperate living.

The statistics on infant mortality, nutrition, education, health care and life expectancy were miserable; the political, economic and social framework surrounding these statistics left little room for optimism.

My impression during my latest trip here was that there is now hope.

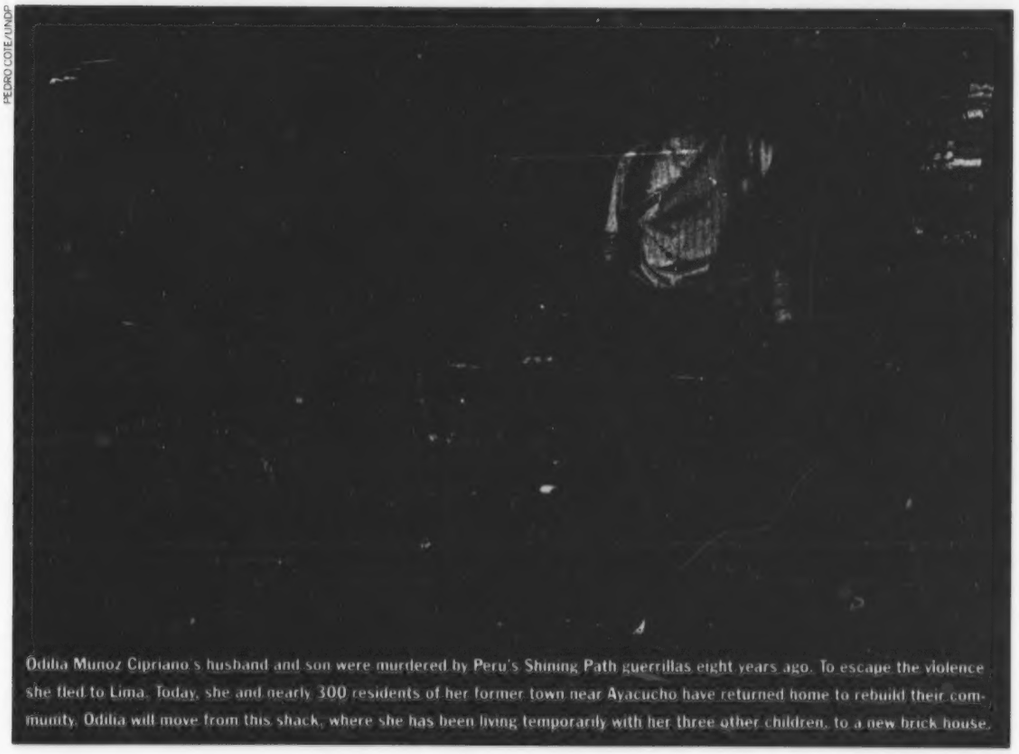
We saw stretches of arid land crossed for the first time by irrigation canals and frail power lines reaching forgotten hamlets above 4,000 metres. We spoke with peasants who were both leaders of their communities and the people who did the actual digging, the planting, the building. They had a clear idea of what they were aiming for, of what they needed, of what they were ready to give of themselves if someone lent them a hand.

There is a popular belief that for every eight dollars the rich give to developing countries, only one trickles down to the poor. The other seven go to cover the needs of the organizations put there to breach the immense gap between rich and poor in the world today.

I do not know if this is true. But I can testify that the money (whatever amount it actually was) that did trickle down to the Bolivian and Peruvian communities we visited made a tremendous difference to the people whose hands we shook—men and women with faces and bodies marked by the exceptional hardships of life, who could now treasure, for the first time, a pump for drinkable water, an electric light bulb, a packet of better seeds, larger potatoes (the basic staple of their diet), the elementary provisions of a health centre.

The trip taught me that one has to be ready to criticize all the possible faults of any such development enterprise; but that this should not be an excuse for abandoning such assistance. If there are faults, they are not *their* faults—not the fault of these men and women. ■

PEDRO COTE/UNDP



Odilia Munoz Cipriano's husband and son were murdered by Peru's Shining Path guerrillas eight years ago. To escape the violence she fled to Lima. Today, she and nearly 300 residents of her former town near Ayacucho have returned home to rebuild their community. Odilia will move from this shack, where she has been living temporarily with her three other children, to a new brick house.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCAS CLAVIO/UNDP

AMAZONIAN FUTURES

By Mary Jo McConahay

Five years ago, the world came together for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Goals were set and promises made. But how much has been achieved? In this, the first of an exclusive two-part series, CHOICES looks at progress in Brazil, the "Earth Summit's" host country and steward of 65 per cent of the Amazonian rainforest. Despite unrelenting deforestation, grassroots efforts offer hope that people can both thrive within—and protect—the precious remaining forests.

Thousands of people continue to migrate to the Amazon region each year in search of a better life, like this man and his son (above) in Acre.

Acre, Brazil—Darkness still shrouds the wood-plank house on a misty river bank in the Amazon jungle. Inside, Sebastião Teixeira Mendes mechanically completes a morning ritual: he kicks a tiny piece of rubber from a ball of the raw stuff, lights it like a wick, tosses the flame onto a pile of wood in the kitchen stove, then puts the coffee on. "You don't think about the cold, but about how hot it's going to get later," he laughs, shivering in the pre-dawn chill.

Outside, a grey light breaks over the largest forest body on the planet, stretching more than seven million square kilometres across eight countries. The basin drained by the Amazon River and its tributaries is a great green treasure house: native vegetation and water systems still cover 92 per cent of its surface, the

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCAS CLAWSO/UNDP

Sebastião Teixeira Mendes' brother, Miguel, plays a Bolivian song about the forest.

earth's greatest single concentration of biological diversity. Rich even in ways we may not yet have discovered, and stunningly beautiful in itself, the Amazon region is important far beyond its borders: it is a living, carbon-absorbing, oxygen-producing carpet critical to the earth's climatic stability.

Mendes and 70 fellow rubber-tapper families of a scattered settlement called Cachoeira, two hours by road from a town called Xapuri in the Brazilian state of Acre, share with millions of other Amazon residents their own, deeply personal reason for halting its destruction: their very survival depends upon it.

"Most people don't even go out on mornings like this," Mendes says, hitting a trail still soggy from unusually heavy overnight rain. As he carefully etches a diagonal cut—not too deep or too shallow—in a marked tree, he watches the white latex ooze, then splinter along the bark in the too cold, too damp air, instead of flowing smoothly into a tin cup nailed to the trunk as it would on a drier morning. Despite the loss, some raw material will still be collected from the 220 trees that Mendes, 52, will tap that day alongside his 18-year-old son, Antonio. Throughout the morning they work quickly and expertly as each has learned to do since childhood, half-watching in their strides for vines and exposed roots that can grab and twist a leg like a pretzel, an eye out for stinging plants, rattlesnakes and yellow-bearded vipers. "We trust to faith, because the snakes bite through your shoes," Antonio grins.

▶ Mendes taps a rubber tree.

Suddenly the sound of a thunderous crash freezes the men. It is a Brazil nut pod, nearly the size and more than the weight of a bowling ball, falling nearby from a great height; father and son talk nervously for a few moments about neighbours caught under such falls, killed or cruelly paralysed. Then, stoically, they return to work. "My own father had 15 children, so we protect our trees, don't work them so hard that they sicken or die," Mendes ruminates, finally breaking the silence. On the way home he stops to collect a medicinal plant—for stomach upset—from the side of a trail.

Experts say that deforestation in Mendes' world is increasing, more each year lost to vast burning, mostly to clear land for agriculture and cattle ranching (close to 15,000 square kilometres just in the Brazilian Amazon in 1994). When tallies are complete for 1995 and 1996, they say, numbers will likely show the percentage of loss accelerating.

One then wonders how young Antonio can stand that afternoon before his father's house—a self-sufficient universe of food gardens, processing sheds for rubber and Brazil nuts, lines for drying jungle game, a universe totally dependent on a standing rainforest—and say with total confidence, "This kind of work, our kind of life, has a future here."

It has been five years since the landmark UN Conference on Environment and Development, when leaders of 108 countries and 30,000 other participants met in Rio de Janiero in the largest-ever gathering of its kind. The dreams and commitments of the "Earth Summit," as it became known, remain far short of fulfilment: As yet, countries have largely failed to weave economic and environment strategies together, a marriage essential for sustainable human development—the kind that conserves resources while enabling citizens to lead decent lives in growing economies. Poverty, recognized at the Rio summit as a driving force behind environmental destruction, is growing too, even as national economic indicators rise. At the same time, foreign aid—essential for combatting poverty—is shrinking. In Rio, industrialized countries agreed to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to development assis-

tance. But today, these countries are contributing an average of less than 0.3 per cent.

Yet even among those who lament that action doesn't come quicker, the Earth Summit is repeatedly called a watershed. It turned a global tide: from hand-wringing debate and anxiety about environmental destruction to a worldwide affirmation that the loss must indeed be stopped, in shared effort, for the welfare of all earth's inhabitants. The summit's action plan, Agenda 21, officially recognized the inextricable links among an intelligently conserved environment, sustainable economic growth and development. After only five years, it may be absurd to expect an about-face in assumptions accepted for centuries: that man was born to dominate nature, that economic growth is worth virtually any cost. But Rio's legally binding conventions (on biodiversity and climate change) and other agreements have become yardsticks against which progress is measured; its Declaration of Principles and Agenda 21 are blueprint and tools in the hands of national authorities, grassroots organizations and local governments. The public consciousness Rio helped crystallize has taken on a life of its own.

"Though the pace of change has been frustratingly slow so far and disappointments abound...it is already clear that the Earth Summit set in motion historical processes that will bear fruit for decades to come," states the 1997 report of the Worldwatch Institute, one of many groups assessing Rio's legacy this year.

Brazil was the Earth Summit's host country; its Amazon the most visible metaphor for environmental struggle. While Greater Amazonia extends into Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela and the territory of French Guiana, by far its greatest extent—65 per cent—is in Brazil. Can public awareness and new laws change the direction of the Amazon region fast enough? Do the young rubber tapper, Antonio Teixeira Mendes, and his fellow forest harvesters, indigenous tribes, river dwellers and millions of others who live from the jungle ecosystems while protecting them, indeed have a future, as the youth so confidently announced?

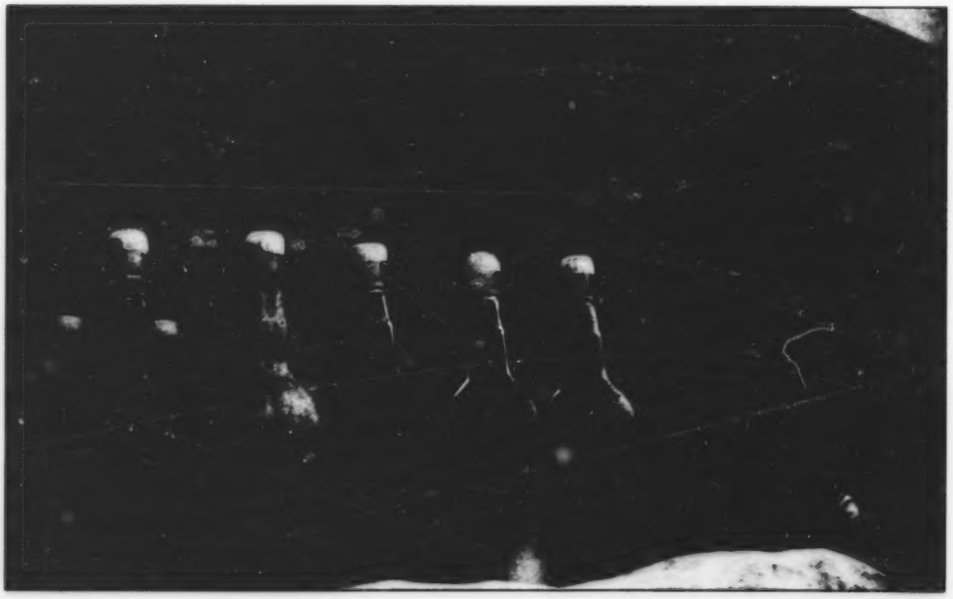
Brazilians will tell you that paying attention to the Amazon at all—not to mention committing resources to it—is a challenge in a country where the most critical national issue is not the environment, but eliminating serious poverty.

After decades of military rule, and a political crisis in 1992 that ended with the impeachment of a civilian president, Brazil has achieved political stability under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Its economy has grown steadily since 1993. Some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods on the continent shine in cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janiero, and national products are sold throughout the hemisphere. But a disturbing reality underlies the glitter. Brazil has the greatest inequality of income distribution of any country in the world, and one of the greatest disparities in land ownership (70 per cent of arable land in the hands of five per cent of landowners). The national *Human Development Report for Brazil 1996*, prepared with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), shows that fully a third of the country's 150 million people are too poor to adequately house, feed and clothe themselves.

Progress seems to be proceeding at a glacial pace, but there are positive signs. Inflation has gone from devastating to single-digit, now allowing even those with low pay to budget and save. Demographic projections for the next 20 years suggest excellent conditions for changing course, because the historically high population growth rate has dropped to 1.5 per cent, so investment in primary health care and education has a chance to produce better results. And the most economically active age group—not the very young or the elderly—is becoming the largest part of the population.

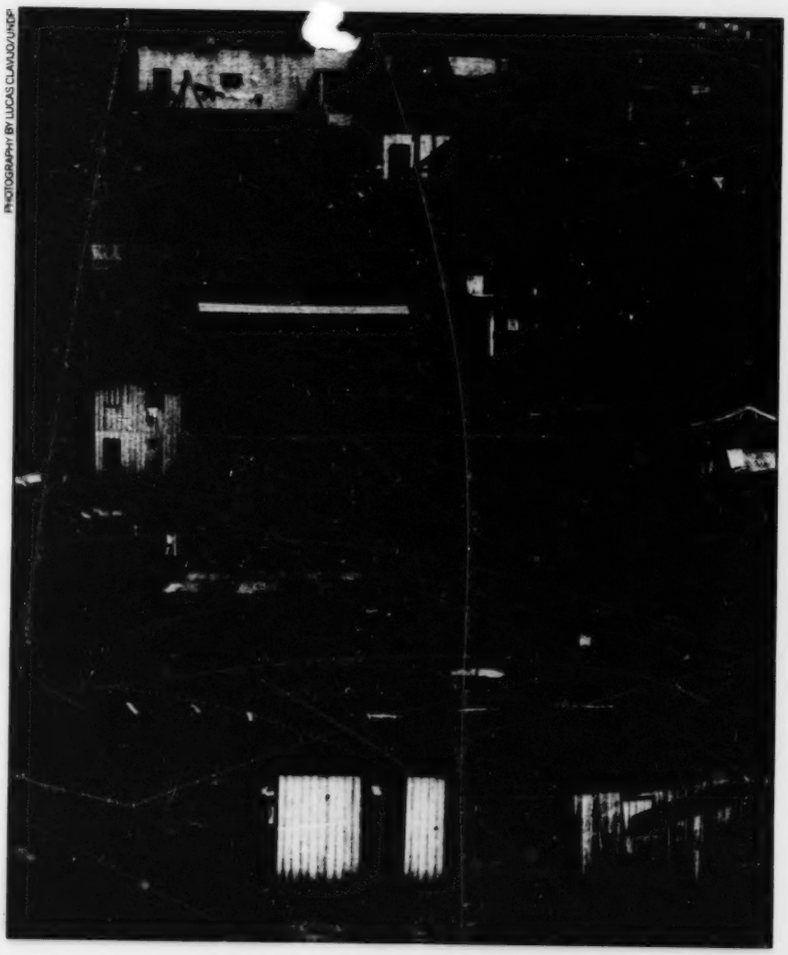
Pressure is great on policymakers in Brasilia, the national capital, because while aware of the demands of eliminating poverty, they know the Amazon cannot wait. Some maintain that protecting the Amazon is itself part of the struggle against poverty, even part of consolidating democracy.

"Only a democratic culture—not authoritarian regimes—allows the expression of actors who defend the environment: non-governmental organizations, civic and minority movements," Environment Minister Gustavo Krause insists. The ministry was created only in 1993, part of a post-Rio environmental protection infrastructure supported by UNDP and others. "We want the national economy to grow, but in a way our natural resources are not compromised, and in a way that incorporates the great mass of those who have been excluded," says Krause.



Street vendor in Xapuri sells vitamin tonics made of local fruit juices.

Attitudes in Brasilia are indeed changing from the days when government considered the Amazon a wide open space, fit for colonizers, huge construction projects and cattle, said Eduardo de Souza Martins, a former national director of the World Wildlife Fund. Now president of the Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCAS CLAVIJO/UNDP

Manaus, located on the Amazon River, has become one of Brazil's ten largest cities in terms of population and is now plagued with the same urban environment concerns as cities in the industrialized south.

(IBAMA), which executes federal environment policy, Martins said it may be impossible to dramatically turn back the clock in the Amazon, "but it *is* possible now to attack the sense that you can do what you want there."

In late 1996, IBAMA called a two-year moratorium on mahogany and some other hardwood extraction—the kind that often wastes other trees and requires destructive road-building. It also cancelled some 65 per cent of logging licenses. While Martins said new timber investment is being invited, loggers must play by the rules: beginning in 1997, airborne sensors and improved satellite imagery will be capable of monitoring not just illegal clear cutting, but subversive selective logging as well. And an infamous rural law was amended in November: landowners will no longer be rewarded by lower taxes on "improved" (read "cut down") forest. Owners of ecologically important tracts are now required to hold 80 per cent—not 50 per cent—in conservation.

In September, representatives of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, international agencies and the European Union gathered in Bonn to evaluate Brazil's efforts on the Amazon. They decided to continue supporting the US$250 million Pilot Programme to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforests (PPG-7), aimed at putting Rio principles into practice. The most important part of the meeting, said some who attended, was a workshop before the formal proceedings, where non-governmental groups, representatives of the private sector, unions and other members of civil society made progress reports. "That day showed it's a broad swath of society that feels ownership of the project, and not just government and the PPG-7," said José Vasconcelos, counsellor for the European Community Commission Delegation.

There *are* problems. President Cardoso's *Plan Real* for stabilizing the economy has resulted in budget cuts at environmentally critical government agencies, including a dramatic slash at the agency charged with protecting areas where indigenous people live. The World Bank, which is supposed to administer the PPG-7's Rainforest Trust Fund ($50 million), is slow to deliver monies to projects on the ground. ("It is still hard to overcome their 'top-down' attitudes of the past," said one frustrated voice.) Government paperwork (including IBAMA's) remains too complicated and antiquated for the resources of small forest-friendly enterprises and cooperatives, with tiny budgets and few members to spare for administrative work; members say they feel crushed trying to fulfil requirements meant for big ranchers, food producers and loggers.

Whatever happens in the offices of the national capital on the plains of central Brazil, environmentalists familiar with work in the field argue policy will be successful only to the extent that it takes into account the efforts and experience of the Amazon's own traditional populations, and the hard-scrabble newcomers who are learning fast what the land can bear.

"It's not reasonable to believe that, with a population of 17 million, split up among several state governments with distinct agendas, and with mineral resources in many places, the future of the Brazilian Amazon can be based only on conservation," said José Edil Benedito, general coordinator of the PPG-7. "Look at these ideas being tested across the Amazon right now: the extractive reserves, a new concept of utilizing forest land by well-organized groups with legal title, such as the rubber tappers; about 86 'demonstration projects' where communities come up with their own ideas about how to survive economically from the rainforest; and demarcating indigenous reserves. These are three great practical ideas for models of sustainable development—the only experience in the world of its kind since 1992."

Back in the hot, humid jungle, Brasilia can seem very far away. But travels among the kind of rainforest enterprises Benedito mentioned show they may be seeds of hope, largely because they originate here in the Amazon itself. Whether they will work out fast enough, and become widespread enough, is still a guess.

"Where I come from in Espirito Santo, a state far away on the Atlantic Coast, a poor person can't buy land, because it is held in great tracts only by those who can afford them," said 32-year-old Edilson Nogueira da Rocha, surveying hectares of sharp grass planted to feed a handful of cows. Nearby in this eastern corner of Acre runs highway BR 364, a reminder

The burnt-out stump of a kapok tree, one of the rainforest giants.

of the rush of Amazon road-building and failed colonization schemes that the government—since Rio—has admitted were grave mistakes. When da Rocha got off the bus in 1984, the landscape was rainforest. He burned it to plant. Soil was thin, as it usually is in the jungle, and after a few seasons, farming poor. On a recent mid-afternoon then, there was no sound but the croaking of swamp frogs, and the wind coming up angry before a storm, howling maddeningly with no wall of trees to absorb its Amazonian noise and force. Farmers just a few years older than da Rocha, but already weathered and wizened-looking, nodded vigorously at his assessment of their shared condition: "We want to get some money, and better water, but here we have been working only for survival."

Yet they won't go home. Two hours away by road in the state of Rondonia, colonist Sebastiana Largina da Silva, 66, who lost a husband weakened to death by bouts of malaria four years ago, gazed at some of her six adult children and many grandchildren working nearby, and put it this way: "We had nowhere else to go, so we stayed."

Yet da Rocha and da Silva are not figures in a tableau of a dying Amazon. Instead, beginning with their own skills and refusal to accept a desperate condition, and with increasing help from the Brazilian government and outside sources since Rio, they are among a growing number of families organizing to use the jungle conditions around them, as rubber tappers have long done—instead of being defeated by them.

Da Rocha's community is using small grants to build pools for aquaculture, taking advantage of the deluge that pours down daily in the rainy season. The fish raised in the pools provide protein; corn once grown only for tossing to chickens in the yard now takes on real money value as fish food; and they can earn cash by selling extra corn for as much as $3 a kilo. The incentive to reforest is strong: water quality depends on surrounding trees, and income from raising fish nudges out dependency on grazing cattle. Sebastiana da Silva's neighbours use small ($252) loans administered through an association the farmers themselves formed years ago with help from the Catholic Church. They invest as they choose, but dedicate a required number of hectares to careful forest farming—collecting fruits and a host of other valuable items. Then they pay back the loan in produce—palm hearts, Brazil nuts or *cupuaçu* fruit for juice—that salaried members process in the association's plant and send by hired trucks and boats to market in Manaus and Belem. In this way, the families create an economic stake in slowly reconstructing the degraded forest around them and, importantly, put down roots so that the destructive cycle of migration—and burning more forest—ends.

As vital as conserving nature, says Sérgio Lopes, coordinator of the association to which Sebastiana da Silva belongs, is the activity of organization itself, which gives residents a sense they are controlling their own lives: frequent meetings of small groups where discussion ranges from planting techniques to aspirations; education and health workshops; participation in marketing decisions. There are communal tasks—like the construction of a school last year—both because there is no money to pay outsiders, and because working together cements the notion that members are part of something more than just the sum of their separate households. Lopes, who arrived last decade armed with gold-prospecting tools to make his fortune, and simply lined up with colonists on the road one morning when a government agency was handing out land titles, says he is glad he stayed. He speaks while winding his way through the da Silva family's agro-forestry plot, which looks and feels like raw jungle, with a humid micro-climate, young mahogany and cedar ("an investment for the children"), coconut, mango, pineapple. "There are 60 things to eat you can see just standing on this spot," Lopes says with pride.

Our municipality has not been destructively exploited yet from the outside, and my administration is going to make sure it stays that way, that the Indian area is conserved, because we can't survive without that. But 60 per cent of the population that elected me is not Indian. I'm mayor for the fishermen and river pilots too.—João Neves Silva of the Galibi Marworno tribe, activist for the Association of Indigenous Peoples, new mayor of Oiapoque, and the first indigenous elected official in Amapá state

Minister Krause likes to say he looks forward to the day when the environment will be so much part of local political agendas that Brazil won't need an environment minister. If this is beginning to happen anywhere, it is happening in the Amazon itself. Here grassroots organizations—based on teamwork and conservation, like Lopes' association of agro-foresters and the rubber tappers union—are beginning to produce political leaders for whom the ideas behind sustainable development have been a way of life. Acre

A young boy paddles his canoe in the Marañon River near Manaus, one of the many smaller rivers that flow into the Amazon.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCAS CLAUDIO/UNDP

Before the author of this story was granted permission to report on the Waiãpi, she was interviewed by the village council. The interview was videotaped for other members of the community and for even more remote Waiãpi villagers who could not attend the council meeting. A group of Waiãpi (above) are shown viewing that tape.

Senator Marina Silva, a former rubber tapper, says she and "maybe three" out of 80 senate members in Brasilia help ensure that debate about Amazon development is "the most horizontal possible, giving visibility to the capacity of ordinary peoples' solutions."

Julio Barbosa, newly elected mayor of the town of Xapuri in Acre, and a former tappers union president, says the long, persistent union struggle showed locals "it was possible to find a new way to make politics."

The transition has not come easily. Barbosa recalls how in the 1970s and 1980s, tapper families who lived from the forest participated in *empate* (stalemate)—unarmed stand-downs before the bulldozers and chainsaws—against the traditionally powerful and arrogant local bosses and urban entrepreneurs who would turn trees into pasture. What the tappers wanted were protected reserves: lands set aside by law for the sole use of forest dwellers gathered into an association or cooperative. Essential too was recognition of people's traditional economic rights to prudently extract rubber, nuts and other forest products, and recognition of the ecological significance of the process in which such communities work. In Xapuri's small cemetery rest the remains of several assassinated activists, including Chico Mendes, Sebastião's cousin and young Antonio's second cousin, who brought the idea to world attention.

Today at least 19 such settlements and reserves totalling more than three million hectares have been declared protected areas by the government, considered models not just of sustainable—but of socially-just—development. Some of their marketing (the union cooperative's Brazil nut brand is called Empate) and other efforts are supported in part by the PPG-7, UNDP and other agencies. Barbosa, himself a former rubber tapper, says his ideas as mayor are meant for all. "A maturity has been reached, that the struggle for the forest and economic well-being is not just for a single group, but can unite all segments of society for the same possibilities," he said.

It is a sentiment that might be echoed at the opposite end of the Brazilian Amazon, in the Atlantic Coast state of Amapá, four time zones away. There,

▶ **A Waiãpi serves kwakiket: a fermented drink made from the yuca plant.**

Governor João Alberto Rodrigues Capiberibe has instituted a sustainable development programme at the state level, emphasizing agro-forestry systems, fishing and plans for tourism. "We think it's possible to develop a region very rich in resources, and to diversify production, without cutting down the rainforest, using the resources to eliminate poverty," said Capiberibe in the governor's residence facing the Amazon, in the state capital of Macapá. "We're looking for the equilibrium."

The best ideas for saving the rainforest may come from the people who live from it day to day; but without political support from officials like Capiberibe, the struggle is infinitely more difficult—perhaps ultimately impossible.

"We had been thinking a long time about how to make ourselves independent, to protect our land and ourselves with the demarcation," said Kumarei Waiãpi, a chief in the Waiãpi Indigenous Reserve, where 448 tribespeople live by hunting much like their ancestors did for centuries. "We did the work, but the governor has respected us, and helped."

Contacted by white men only in the 1970s, the Waiãpi quickly began to die from their diseases, against which they had no defense: measles, simple flu. When goldminers arrived, Waiãpi died poisoned by the mercury that flowed

downstream. Today a visit to Waiãpi villages six hours by road from Macapá finds few elderly persons, so many of that contact generation having been wiped out before their time. But the deepest distrust of the white man comes from what the Waiãpi see as his penchant for destroying trees.

"My father told me the white man is different from us: we do not terminate the forest, and he does," said Kumarei (all Waiãpi have the same last name). "And now we tell our children the same thing: never trust the white man, for he will end by cutting your trees."

One morning Kumarei shows a visitor elements of the pride of the tribe, the system that delineates Waiãpi territory, forbidding entrance to outsiders. Amid flowering vines, rushing streams and thick jungle where toucans fly, and wiry-limbed monkeys jump among the trees, a round metal disk protected by a cage of boards indicates the place where one of 21 satellite monitoring markers is buried near the perimeter of the reserve. Twelve metres wide, the perimeter itself is a kind of buffer zone girdling the 607,000-hectare Waiãpi homeland. Indians cleared the buffer of jungle, marked it with signs and planted it with fruits and vegetables —no one could "accidentally" intrude.

To do the job, Waiãpi learned to read maps ("The first time I saw a map, I had no idea we took up so little space in the world!"). They recounted family histories to know where the borders were, made sure headwaters were included so streams would stay pure, solicited some technical and financial help from PPG-7, UNDP and the German government development agency, and saw their land declared an official reserve last year. Children are taken along to patrol, with bow and arrow and 16-gauge shotguns, so they too can learn to protect the area when their elders are gone. A half-hour's walk outside the Waiãpi land, white settlers' households begin, stumps of once huge forest giants nearby still smoking from a burn. "You see how the white man cuts the *mata*, kills the forest?" Kumarei says, his eyes attempting a look of vindication at proof of what he had said all along, but his voice keening.

"Our life is nature which brings us health; we don't want to live in the city but to keep our forest, and we feel more liberty, more confidence to do that now, with the demarcation," said Tsaco, another chief, sitting on a carved log before his house of stick and palm thatch. He was painted from head to toe for protection with *achiote* powder so that he seemed to glow red, black stars painted on his cheeks, his wrists wound round with blue beads, his only clothing a bright red loincloth. Tsaco's son Akauptyr, 22, who will be chief someday when his father dies, listened.

Isn't young Akauptyr tempted by the outside world? Waiãpi are familiar with Macapá, where many have gone when medical problems cannot be treated locally. Does he want to leave the forest?

Akauptyr's appearance, beaded and feathered, is far different from that of Antonio Teixeira Mendes, the teenage rubber tapper in Acre who believes he has continued prospects in the place his father and grandfather worked. But in a way both young men exude the same kind of confidence, a belief that there is a future in their forest ways of life.

"My family is here," said Akauptyr. "This is where I stay." ■

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Waiãpi children rest inside their home made of palm thatch and other forest materials.

OZONE WATCH

The elimination of chemicals harmful to the earth's ozone layer has been the most ambitious attempt ever to combat environmental degradation on a global scale. But advances so far could be offset by delays among some of the largest developing countries—with serious human and ecological consequences.

Ozone is spread so finely throughout the stratosphere that if it were collected together it would form a ring around the earth no thicker than a man's shoe. Yet without this protective layer, ultraviolet radiation from the sun would kill virtually all terrestrial life.

Ten years ago, spurred by scientific evidence of a "hole" in the ozone layer the size of the continental United States, the world community agreed to phase out all ozone-depleting chemicals. This landmark agreement, known as the Montreal Protocol, has been credited with reducing by 76 per cent the most harmful of these substances—chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

But while the elimination of CFCs in the industrialized countries has been nothing short of dramatic, progress among important developing countries has been hampered by shortfalls in financing and other problems. Whether renewed support promised by donor countries at a Costa Rica meeting last November will succeed in getting the phaseout back on track remains to be seen.

The ozone saga began in 1974 when two US scientists—Mario Molina and F. Sherwood Rowland from the University of Southern California—first hypothesized that man-made CFCs, developed in the 1930s, were escaping into the atmosphere and eroding the ozone layer. Their ground-breaking article, published in the British journal, *Nature*, touched off a furore in the scientific and corporate communities. But Rowland and Molina's assertions were largely ignored by policymakers until 1985, when a team of atmospheric chemists from the British Antarctic Survey discovered a gaping ozone hole over the South Pole. Subsequent studies confirmed that the hole was not only real, it was expanding.

Miracle chemicals

By this time, CFCs and a whole galaxy of other ozone depleting substances (ODSs) had become ubiquitous in industry and consumer products. These "miracle" chemicals, as they were known, were cheap to produce, non-toxic to human beings and did not react with other substances. They were used as propellants in aerosol cans, foam-blowing agents, coolants in refrigerators and air-conditioning units, and solvents for electronic parts.

Because of the complex nature of eliminating such widely used substances, the Montreal Protocol established a two-track approach to phasing them out. Industrialized countries—which were responsible for about 80 per cent of the one million metric tons of CFCs produced globally in 1985—were obliged to eliminate *all* CFCs, along with most other ozone depleters, by the year 2000. Most developing countries were given a ten-year grace period to allow them time to develop national phaseout programmes and to move into the use of "transition chemicals," such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), which still damage the ozone layer but are much less harmful than CFCs. If all goes as planned, all ozone-damaging chemicals will be eliminated no later than 2040, with the most harmful ones phased out by 2010.

But even with full international compliance, the ozone-depleters already in the stratosphere will continue to destroy ozone molecules, says K. M. Sarma, executive secretary of the Ozone Secretariat at the UN Environment Programme. "Peak global ozone losses are expected to occur during the next ten years—during which time another three to four per cent of the ozone layer will be destroyed—before the rates of decline level off and start to diminish," he says. The ozone layer will then begin to repair itself; but is only expected to return to normal pre-ozone-hole levels in the middle of the next century, Sarma says.

As the earth's ozone layer continues to shrink, the incidence of skin cancers, especially deadly melanoma, has increased significantly; exposure to ultraviolet radiation also causes cataracts, which can lead to blindness. Scientists admit they have no idea how many other crippling ailments might be triggered by ozone loss.

They also fear that continued deterioration of the ozone layer could drastically diminish the production of blue-green algae, one of the fundamental links in the marine food chain. If algae begin to die off, a massive crash in the fish population would follow, eroding the main source of protein for over one billion people in the developing world. Moreover, added solar radiation hitting the earth's surface—in

combination with projected shifts in global climate—could also adversely affect the production of staple crops, such as wheat, rice and maize.

Because of these threats—and new evidence that ozone loss is occurring faster than scientists had anticipated—the Montreal Protocol has been adjusted and amended three times: in 1990, 1992 and 1995, each time further tightening the phaseout schedules.

A Multilateral Fund

A unique feature of the Montreal Protocol, which has been ratified so far by more than 155 countries, is its establishment of a special "Multilateral Fund" to help developing countries meet their commitments. Although the production of CFCs in the industrialized world had been eliminated altogether by 1995, 360,000 metric tons are still being produced and consumed each year by developing countries and the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union.

The Multilateral Fund has moved quickly to bring down developing-country consumption of CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances. But the process has been painful and costly. Like their northern neighbours, developing countries have millions of refrigerators and air-conditioning units that have to be adapted for use with other chemicals or recycled CFCs. Moreover, several developing countries have made large investments in manufacturing processes using CFC technologies, which will have to be revamped or, in the worst case, scrapped.

So far the Multilateral Fund has allocated US$540 million for nearly 1,300 projects in 99 developing countries. When fully implemented, these projects are expected to reduce by about one-third current consumption levels. But delayed payments by some donor countries have hindered the implementation of a number of important programmes. By October 1996, the Multilateral Fund had received 20 per cent less money than was pledged by donors. As a result, several ODS-reduction programmes were underfunded or put on hold.

The situation brightened considerably in November 1996, when representatives from the industrialized countries pledged to replenish the Multilateral Fund for the period 1997-1999 with $540 million—about $100 million more than had been expected.

"The net impact on the three main implementing agencies—the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Bank—will likely be that each one will see its annual investment project allocation increase by around one-third," says Frank Pinto, principal technical adviser and chief of the Montreal Protocol Unit at UNDP in New York. "The donors genuinely responded to developing-country pleas to help them phase out ODSs faster, and we are absolutely delighted by the outcome."

The renewed commitment on the part of the donors came none too soon for Pinto, who lobbied hard for increased funding and, like other UN agency representatives charged with supporting the developing countries, had been frustrated by the delays. Since UNDP began assisting countries in phasing out ODSs in 1991, the organization has helped finance 287 investment projects in 49 countries. "The replenishment of funds for these programmes means that we have gained back our credibility," says Pinto.

Problems remain

Progress has been swifter than expected in some of these countries: Colombia, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey announced in November that they are ahead of schedule in meeting protocol targets.

But problems remain. Brazil, China and India, which account for over 40 per cent of the global population, have complained about funding delays and too much red tape in transferring ozone-friendly technologies from North to South.

Both China and India are still manufacturing CFCs and plan to continue doing so until the turn of the century. Over the course of the coming decades, these countries will produce millions of household refrigerators using CFCs and HCFCs to meet the needs of their growing populations. If they are stalled in their efforts to eliminate ODSs, it could have grave consequences for the ozone layer.

Acutely aware of this possibility, UNDP and other agencies have been working hard with developing countries to keep them on target.

India signed the Montreal Protocol in 1993 and has devoted considerable time and expense in formulating a national strategy to phase out all ODSs. "Assuming that the promised new funding levels materialize, we still have two contentious areas," explains Hukum Singh Kaprwan, joint director of the Defence Institute of Fire Research in New Delhi. "In the first place, we need to get faster access to suitable transition chemicals and other ozone-saving technologies. And second, we need to find ways to help small and medium-sized companies eliminate CFCs and other ozone depleters from their production processes."

Currently, there is very little funding available specifically to help cushion

"Peak global ozone losses are expected to occur during the next ten years."

the expenses that small and medium-sized firms must incur. "In the halon sector alone, there are 20 to 30 Indian companies using around one ton or less of ozone damaging chemicals every year," explains Kaprwan. "And so far, our action plan ignores these guys completely; we have no money for them at all."

At the Costa Rica meeting, another emerging crisis was aired: the growing contraband market for banned CFCs and other ODSs. Russia, in fact, is believed to be the main source of this trade. The country failed to stop production of CFCs for domestic use by the agreed deadline of January 1996. By the end of that year, seven Russian factories were still producing over 52,000 metric tons of CFCs a year; half of it slated for export to developing countries in direct violation of the Montreal Protocol.

In spite of these remaining challenges, UN officials are optimistic for the first time in several years that the protocol is back on track and will achieve its main objectives, setting a hopeful precedent for other global environmental problems. ■

Don Hinrichsen, an environmental writer based in London and New York City, is a contributing editor to Amicus Journal *and* People & the Planet. *His most recent book is* Living on the Edge: Managing Coasts in Crisis *(Island Press, 1997).*

NOTEBOOK

BIRDS AND BIKINIS

Cayo Coco—The Sabana-Camaguey archipelago stretches like a white pearl necklace off Cuba's northeast coast. Most of the flora and fauna here are found nowhere else in the world. But in winter, the islands become home for tens of thousands of birds escaping chilly northern climes. At dawn and dusk the shores of Cayo Coco, the main island, turn pink with at least 30,000 pair of flamingos, for whom the islands are a year-round nesting ground.

The mangroves, lagoons, forests and swamps are also refuge for cormorants, herons and other birds. Lizards, iguanas and rodents hide in *diente de perro* (dog teeth) rock formations or in the dense sea grape foliage clinging to the highest sand dunes in the Caribbean. Wild cattle, horses, deer and boar roam the underbrush. Giant sea turtles lay their precious eggs in the sand and share the waters with one of the largest coral reefs in the world.

Until a few years ago, Sabana-Camaguey had remained virtually untouched by human beings (although legend has it that a group of women were abandoned here by pirates in the 16th century). But practically overnight, hotels mushroomed on this tropical paradise when cash-strapped Cuba began developing its tourism industry in the early 1990s—largely to compensate for the resources it no longer received from the former Soviet Union.

As more and more deluxe accommodations started springing up, and the country's income began to rise, bulldozers began work on a new 17-kilometre causeway connecting Cuba's mainland to the Sabana-Camaguey Islands. Today, swimsuit-clad tourists from around the world—along with the birds—flock here in droves. Tourism, in fact, has become the nation's largest earner of foreign exchange, with revenues rising to more than US$1 billion in 1996.

Cuba's Constitutional Charter is one of the few in the world that already included laws to protect the environment, so preservation of the islands' wildlife had government priority even before completion of the causeway. Since the islands were sure to attract thousands of tourists, a carefully laid plan to protect biodiversity and move on a course of sustainable development had to be established early on.

With funding from the Global Environment Facility, UNDP began working with Cuban officials to make sure this happened. At a UNDP-supported eco-station on Cayo Coco, 29 scientists have identified the unique animal and vegetable species on the islands and surrounding waters and have set standards to protect their habitats. When they discovered that the new causeway was leading to increased salinity around the islands, the government immediately replaced parts of the structure with bridges to allow sea water to flow more freely around Sabana-Camaguey. The scientists also monitor waste disposal and provide advice on controlling beach erosion. And their trained eyes are always on the lookout for changes in weather patterns, oil spills from passing ships, or anything else that might alter the fragile balance of people and nature.

As part of the plan, the government encourages all tourists to visit the eco-station's wildlife display or to take one of the guided nature walks.

Foresight led the government to restrict tourism development to only four per cent of Sabana-Camaguey. And developers realize that the area's tourism boom could bust if the other 96 per cent were destroyed.

Will this eco-tourism experiment work? So far, the answer is yes. With careful planning, the islands' ecology and natural beauty can be preserved while visitors in future generations still have their fun in the sun. ■

— Danielle Hayes

DANIELLE HAYES/UNDP

▲ Sea grapes and sea fans on the island of Cayo Coco.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

After 30 years of professionally espousing the virtues of sustainable agriculture, Friedrich von Mallinckrodt is making it his personal mission as well. The recently retired UNDP staff member has set up an annual prize—the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Award—for people who share his vision of simple and low-cost approaches to farming. Winners receive US$10,000, with the money coming from the sponsor's own pocket.

Von Mallinckrodt criticizes modern technologies such as chemical fertilizers and heavy equipment that, in his view, have largely failed to lift the developing world's farmers out of poverty. "Such technologies

▶ Farmers at work in Southern Africa.

are often totally unsuitable and unaffordable for the majority of the rural poor," he adds. The solution: farming that is productive, environmentally safe, draws on what people already know and makes a difference in the quality of their lives, says von Mallinckrodt. "We're talking about organic farming, which is sustainable agriculture in its purest form," he says.

The cash award he is offering is designed to acknowledge and support efforts at agro-ecologic farming, as he calls it. Such farming is not only good for the environment and for families who earn their living from the land. It also yields better produce. "Most people are simply fed up with tasteless, unhealthy, genetically-engineered foods that are often contaminated by chemicals in the water, soil and air," he adds.

The 1996 prize, awarded in Copenhagen last August, was shared by three organizations that are either doing research on simple farming techniques or helping communities get more out of their land. Sharing the $10,000 prize were the Kenya Institute for Organic Farming, the Agricultural Renewal in India for Sustainable Environment organization and the Cuban Organic Farming Association.

Nominations are accepted from individuals or groups, and the winners are named by a jury of ten experts.

For application guidelines on the 1997 award, write to Friedrich von Mallinckrodt at Wolfgang-Klausner Strasse 11, D-83339, Chieming, Germany. Fax: (49) 8664-929802. E-mail: sard.mallinckrodt@t-online.de ■

— Richard Kollodge

JOINT VENTURE

UN PHOTO

Multinationals, governments and UNDP are working together to meet the needs of local people.

Industry demands profits. People demand basic services and a healthy environment. Must their interests collide?

As local and multinational corporations establish themselves in the developing world, their needs—and their investment dollars—often seem to prevail. Yet a number of experts maintain that business and governments *can* work together for the benefit of both people and the private sector.

To put this theory to the test, UNDP launched a programme called Public Private Partnerships for the Urban Environment. At the Habitat II conference last June, a group of aid donors agreed to a US$10 million fund to finance the new endeavour, which expects to have 50 pilot projects under way in the next five years.

UNDP officials are optimistic that such partnerships can harness private sector money, expertise and technology to help meet social and environmental goals of governments strapped for cash, especially in key areas such as water supply, energy and waste management. For UNDP's Luis Gomez-Echeverri, director of the programme, such partnerships are critical—and urgent. "Cities in the developing world are growing at unprecedented rates, and even now, governments cannot cope with the demand for services."

One model project is already under way in Harare, Zimbabwe. Willowvale industrial park is home to a mix of local companies and some of the best known names in international business: Colgate-Palmolive, Schweppes, Mazda, BP & Shell and Asea Brown Boveri. Zimbabwe provides these companies with an attractive environment for generating profits. And what does Zimbabwe get in return? Jobs, for starters. Willowvale, which covers 3.5 square kilometres, encompasses more than 200 firms, employing more than 20,000 people.

But to keep Willowvale alive, Harare has to provide the site with energy and water, among other services. R.S. Maya, executive chairman of the Southern Centre for Energy and Environment, a local non-governmental organization working with UNDP, says that "if the industries cascade the water they use—passing it from one plant to the next according to the level of water pollution each one can tolerate—everybody will get water of the quality they want, and the city will have to provide less water to Willowvale. Such a system will reduce costs for industry and conserve resources."

In late 1995, UNDP talked with Zimbabwean officials and 23 Willowvale industries, including the multinationals mentioned above, about setting up an independent, joint-venture service company to initiate this kind of water recycling. If successful, the project could serve as a model for socially-responsible, environmentally-sound resource management of industries all over Africa.

"We're still at a fairly preliminary stage," says Robin Welsh of the Switzerland-based organization, Sustainable Project Management, which is helping UNDP move the project forward. "Nevertheless, I estimate that 12 months from now we'll have people from government agencies and from Willowvale investing in a business that would embrace both energy and water conservation and bring benefits to all partners."

Taking the same approach, the Zimbabwe Electrical Supply Authority (ZESA) is looking to reduce its investment cost in peak power supply. "If industries at Willowvale stagger the starting times of plants, they will save money by reducing energy use at peak hours, when tariffs are highest," explains Maya. "Then when ZESA wants to do household electrification, they can use the power they save."

Maya and his colleagues believe that Willowvale's initial successes can spread to other Zimbabwean industrial parks. In fact, if the Willowvale project goes as planned, a similar public-private company is likely to have a hand in the design of an even larger park near Harare, scheduled for construction soon. "We don't expect the private sector to be a charity," says Jonas Rabinovitch of UNDP. "At the same time, we understand that the public sector should not give up its social and environmental responsibilities. That's why we talk about public-private partnerships." ■

— Kristin Helmore

DEVELOPMENT

Big word
Lotsa meanings
Stinks dollar
Magnetic circle
Entices life
Urban drift
Empty villages
Customs forgotten
Loose living
Lost identity
Rat Race
Dollar talks
Values change
Wantoks* ignored
Every man for himself
I want to develop too!

— JULLY SIPOLO, SOLOMON ISLANDS

***Wantoks means people of the same language group, literally "one talk."**

This poem was sent to CHOICES by the UNDP office in Fiji.

TALK BACK

READERS RESPOND

On economic globalization (CHOICES, January 1997):

Congratulations on your courage in publishing David Korten's critique, "Global Growth at Too High a Cost." Who can deny that the world economy is dominated by financial elites who care more about interest rates and profit maximization for the minority than about human joy and suffering for the majority? How many symptoms of global malfunction do we need? The ozone hole at the South Pole now measures more than 18 million square kilometres, the oceans are being deoxygenated, topsoil is being lost at an alarming rate, groundwater is being polluted and wasted in vast quantities, species are being exterminated more rapidly than ever before in history, and a human being is dying from the effects of poverty every two seconds on average. How could this not be considered a crisis that requires fundamental rethinking of the global economy and its rules/rulers?

Kevin Danaher, co-founder, Global Exchange, San Francisco

While I agree with David Korten's contention that developing countries need to reclaim their economic sovereignty from multinational corporations, I find certain flaws in his argument. First, we should not imagine that the poor are satisfied with only meeting their basic needs; on the contrary, this should be considered a starting point for economic growth that will improve their standards of living and quality of life. Second, the goal should not be to stop growth but to spread its benefits equitably. I strongly support the observation of Ruben Mendez that delinking Third World economies from the global mainstream would only perpetuate the poverty of the developing world.

Winston Mathu, senior programme adviser, UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought, New York

Ruben Mendez, in his response to David Korten's article, asserts that we have no option but to increase the size of the economic pie. But given the present patterns, most of these increases will entail massive destruction of ecological resources, with widespread displacement of communities. In most instances the world over, communities have little or no chance to decide whether they want to be part of the industrial system. Growth in much of Southeast Asia, for example, is based on the destruction of the region's forests, the pollution of its waters and the displacement and cultural disruption of millions of people. The defence of this economic model will only exacerbate the social, cultural and ecological costs.

Smitu Kothari, a founder of Lokayan ("Dialogue of the People") in New Delhi and a visiting professor at Cornell and Princeton universities

Mr. Mendez is wrong if he thinks that the development of the mining industry in the Philippines will provide the indigenous with jobs and get us out of the rut of poverty. In fact, as an Igorot myself, I can say that the liberalization of the industry and its incursion into more and more areas of the country are regarded as a threat to our very existence.

Our elders have told us that the main reason for continuing our protests against mining operations is that having cash in exchange for labour is short-lived. When the cash runs out and the lands are devastated beyond rehabilitation we will have nothing. We may not be able to enjoy the so-called comforts of modern society, but our quality of life may be richer than those who are compelled to continuously amass profits.

Mr. Mendez is right when he says that we are not just out to preserve our economic and cultural past. We certainly would like to move forward and carve out a more sustainable future for ourselves and future generations. However, we will do this at our own pace, with great consideration for the sustainable practices and traditions that our ancestors have taught us, and not be rushed into surrendering to the globalization agenda of others.

For the record, I would also like to correct Mr. Mendez's claim that "the bulk of gold once found on Igorot lands had been mined long ago by Spanish and American colonizers." In fact, for nearly 300 years our ancestors were successful in defending our lands against the Spanish. The Americans did open up the region to large-scale mining, but only in the province of Benguet. The Cordillera region, up to now, remains the richest region in the country as far as deposits of gold, silver and copper are concerned.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, director, Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, Quezon City, Philippines

On poverty (October 1996):

Congratulations on Naresh Singh's article, "The Wealth of the Poor," in the October issue. It was reassuring to see that poverty is not everywhere equated with low income, which is essentially a Western consumer standard. Rather, as the issue suggests, poverty is more a state of dereliction—or helplessness—that appears most commonly in rapidly changing societies and among the urban poor, where community adaptive solutions have had no time to evolve and where support systems have broken down. If this is the case, then we ought to worry more about the effects of rapid economic change and globalization.

Isabelle Grunberg, senior policy analyst, Office of Development Studies, UNDP, New York

CHOICES welcomes feedback from readers. Letters for publication should include the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number or fax, and should be addressed to the editor, CHOICES Magazine, UNDP Division of Public Affairs, One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017. Fax: (212) 906-5364. E-mail: isis.jensen@undp.org. Letters may be edited for reasons of clarity and space.

FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

The excitement over Kofi Annan's new job as UN Secretary-General was captured by Ambassador Daniel Abibi of the Congo. "The new has traversed our deserts, our savannas and our forests. This is a great day for the sons of Africa," Abibi said during Mr. Annan's swearing-in ceremony on 17 December 1996. The Secretary-General himself likes to emphasize that he is a proud son of Africa.

But he is also quick to point out that he is a lifetime international civil servant. His global view is unmistakable—as is his sense of humour, which is well known to friends. Even the international tensions over the choice of a new Secretary-General did not detract from his ability to joke. In response to continuous press reports that at least one country was insisting that a francophone candidate get the job, Mr. Annan quipped, "I now speak English with a French accent." He belongs to a generation of Ghanaians who have had the good fortune to be fluent in many languages. To prove it, the new Secretary-General delivered part of his acceptance speech in French and conducted several interviews in that language.

In a message of congratulations, UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth said that it was a testimony to the strength of the United Nations that someone who rose up through the UN's ranks was chosen as Secretary-General. Mr. Speth also said he was pleased with the election outcome because Mr. Annan attaches so much importance to development.

Kofi Annan was born in 1938 in the town of Kumasi in central Ghana. His father, the late H.R. Annan, was chief of the Fanti community in Kumasi and served in the courts of the powerful king of the Ashantis. As one Ghanaian

His global view is unmistakable—as is his sense of humour.

journalist observed, "in Ghana, nobody survives as a chief without skills in management and diplomacy." Indeed, the elder Annan appears to have taught his son well.

In answer to a recent question by the *New York Times* on whether his low-key style was a liability in his demanding new job, the Secretary-General replied: "There seems to be a sense out there that unless you are confrontational and get into contentious situations you are not tough, you are not a leader, you are not free." He went on to say, "I've never shared that view in my life and I'm not going to change now."

The course of Mr. Annan's career from his early days in Ghana included stints in Geneva with the World Health Organization and the UN High Commission for Refugees, in Addis Ababa with the Economic Commission for Africa, and in New York, where his fast ascent took him to the job of under-secretary general for peace-keeping. He has had to oversee the UN's work in virtually all of Africa's flash points, and his election is a morale boost for the recovery and development of the continent.

In a recent meeting with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, UNDP's assistant administrator and director for the regional bureau for Africa, Mr. Annan underscored his interest in accelerating progress in Africa and talked about ways in which his offices could be used to foster the peace process in troubled areas.

The Secretary-General's response to the fiery issue of UN reform is one that he is likely to be judged by in these crucial early months. Within days of his appointment, Mr. Annan called in Maurice Strong, a well-known reformer with experience both in the United Nations and the corporate world to work with him on changes and other sensitive matters, including the UN's financial crisis. Mr. Strong, a Canadian, is also credited with bringing together world leaders at the Earth Summit in 1992.

With the daunting task of reform and the challenges that lie ahead for the UN, Annan's equanimity will be especially important. Showing that good humour runs deep in her family, the Secretary-General's 88-year-old mother, Victoria, told reporters several months ago that the young Kofi was a mischievous child who sometimes got into trouble. But, she said, he always managed to get out of it.

It is another sign that the world body, despite current difficulties, is in good hands.

Djibril Diallo

Son—and daughter—of Africa: Kofi Annan and UNDP's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, of Liberia.

MATTERS OF FACT

The average person in an industrialized country uses nearly twice as much **water** as someone in the developing world, and nearly 10 times as much as someone in sub-Saharan Africa. The average US or Canadian citizen uses about twice as much commercial **energy** as a resident of the United Kingdom, France or Germany, 10 times that of a Jordanian, 50 times that of a Guatemalan, 100 times that of a Vietnamese, and 500 times that of a person living in Chad or Burkina Faso. More than 15 million hectares of **forest** disappear every year: almost one-quarter of this loss (3.7 million hectares) occurs in Brazil, followed by India (1.5 million hectares), Indonesia (920,000 hectares) and Colombia (890,000 hectares). A quarter of the earth's land area—3.6 billion hectares—is affected by **desertification,** costing an estimated US$42 billion a year in lost productivity—$9 billion in Africa alone. » A person born in Finland uses more than 27 times the amount of printing and **writing paper** as the average person in the developing world. » Nordics **recycle** two-thirds of their glass bottles and jars; North Americans recycle only about one-fourth. The USA produces 24% of global **greenhouse gases** and 10 times the amount of **hazardous waste** as the next largest producer. A city dweller in the US generates twice the amount of **trash** as an urban resident of Germany, Italy, Spain or Sweden.

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